

Text = Philemon = 17th & 18.

that can say, although the sinner be wallowing in crime and down to the lowest depths, "ARISE, SERMON: be forgiven thee." And Paul arose, DELIVERED AT THE DENVER COUNTY JAIL, by the hand of the Lord, SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 19, 1911, and things gave up on his knees praying. By Jim Goodheart. Paul did more on his knees than he did with his pen.)

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Now, in another part of the city there was a certain disciple named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Behold, I am here, Lord." (And I sinner the world has ever known, the chief of sinners--the Apostle would that more Christians today would say what when the Lord Paul.

He had been given authority to take the Christians and cast them into prison and torture them as he chose. He was present when Stephen was stoned to death; he stood by and sanctioned every movement of those who were stoning him.

He was a man who exercised authority. He was a politician. He was a college graduate. He had all the worldly prosperity that man can long for. He wasn't in need of a meal or a place to sleep.

This man, Saul of Tarsus, was on his way to Damascus, with letters in his pocket empowering him to bind and persecute any and all Christians, whether they were men or women, and bring them to Jerusalem.

As he journeyed along the road and came in sight of the city of Damascus, suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, causing him to fall to the ground (Oh! the brilliancy of God's love is so great that it will shine into the hardest and blackest heart and brighten it up!), and the voice of the Lord spoke to Saul, saying: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." And Paul said, tremblingly, "Who art thou?" And the voice said: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. Arise and go into the city." (It is only the voice of God, when He speaks to the sinner's heart,

that can say, although the sinner be wallowing in crime and down to the lowest depths, "Arise, thy sins be forgiven thee.") And Paul arose, and the men that were with him took him by the hand and led him away into the city, and there he spent three days upon his knees praying. (And by the way, Paul did more on his knees than he did with his pen.)

Now, in another part of the city there was a certain disciple named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Behold, I am here, Lord." (And I would that more Christians today would say that when the Lord speaks to them.) And the Lord said unto him, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth." Ananias had heard much of this man Saul and of his persecutions of the Christians, but this was the Lord's command: "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel. I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Now, if you expect to be a follower of Christ and reign with Him, I want you to know that you have got to suffer as well. You must take "the bitter with the sweet.")

It seems strange to us that God should select such a man for a "chosen vessel" to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. The Jews were given the first opportunity to accept Christ, but they turned it down. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Now, then, you can see the condition of the Jews today. Through their rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are scattered over the entire universe, having no leader, no country--nothing. They are God's chosen people, however, and many of them will yet be saved. But owing to their refusal of Christ, He has come to you and to me--the Gentile race--and some of us, up to this time, have also rejected Him; and some day, if we are not careful, He will reject us.

Now, while Paul was yet praying, Ananias came to him, and laying his hand upon him, said, "Saul, my brother, receive thy sight," and immediately the scales fell from his eyes, and he opened them and saw the world in a new light.

So, Saul was called of God to preach the gospel; and the Lord sent him to Arabia, where he spent three years. And then, when the Lord directed him to go on his missionary campaign, he proved to be so great an evangelist that the world has never yet known his equal; and these were his words while he was being led through the valley of the shadow of death, as he stood before his own open grave: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." But just a little while before that, he had said these words, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Now, then, you may be a great sinner, you may have committed all the sins that are on the calendar and known to man--murder, adultery, robbery and the rest of the sins that the world looks at, from its mortal eye, as most horrible--but you cannot be a greater sinner than the chief. Paul was the chief of sinners, and the Lord saved him, and so far as we know he never back-slid. So, there is great hope in this salvation for all who will accept.

Now, this same Paul was later taken prisoner, and sent to Rome to be tried before Caesar; and for two years he dwelt in his own house, working with his hands, a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ, bound with chains and guarded day and night. The picture is very pathetic. He is at work with his hands writing the very history that we have today, a part of the record of God's redeeming grace in him. On either side of him stand two Roman soldiers.

Before being sent to this prison, when in another country preaching the gospel, Paul had been in partnership with a man named Philemon, who owned a slave called Onesimus. This slave ran away from his master, and came to Rome, probably staggering around the streets of the city without any money in his pocket or food to satisfy his hunger. He finally recognized Paul, his master's old business partner; and Paul preached the gospel to him, and Onesimus became then and there a child of God, and told Paul his history and how he had run away from his master.

And I believe these are about the words Paul said to Onesimus: "Now, my brother, you can't lead a good Christian life until you make all things right so far as it lieth within you. I am going to send you back with a letter to my beloved partner, Philemon, asking him to release you."

Onesimus put the letter in his pocket, and went back to his master, expecting to be locked up; but Paul said another thing in this letter, namely: "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account."

This was a great confidence to obtain in so short a time from such a man as Paul; but God raises up friends for us. The brothers, the sisters, the mothers and the fathers we lose in the flesh, God multiplies to us four-fold through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I went into Sunshine Mission one night, and accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour, not that I was sorry for my condition only, for in earthly possessions and opportunities I felt that all had been lost forever, but because I was convicted of my sins, and I realized my lost condition. I cried out to the Lord, drunk and dirty though I was, "God, have mercy upon me, a sinner, and save my soul for Jesus' sake." God honored that prayer because it came from my heart ("For with the heart man be-

lieveth unto righteousness."), and the Holy Spirit made intercession for me with groanings, and God forgave my sins for Jesus' sake.

Since that very moment God has been raising up for me brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, until today I have them from coast to coast, and He will do the same for you.

This slave Onesimus trembled when he went back to his master. In those days, if someone would intercede for a man who was a slave, that person could buy his freedom, assuming all his debts and paying for everything that he owed. (Paul knew what freedom was, and some of us can know it here today, if we will.) And when Philemon opened the letter, and read within it the words from his old partner: "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account," he said to Onesimus, "I will have to set you free."

Now, isn't that a picture of what Jesus Christ does for us? Jesus came down in the likeness of sinful flesh. "The word became flesh, and dwelt among us." That was God's Son, fulfilling the prophecy of the Old Testament. He took upon himself our sins, and bore them for us, and He, when enduring the agony of the cross, as He "poured out His soul unto death," said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. If they owe thee ought, Oh! Heavenly Father, if thou count me worthy as thy only begotten Son, though many their sins may be, place them on my account, and let them go free." Jesus is saying those very words this morning. Doesn't it bring you back to Golgotha? God has done everything that He can for you and for me that we may go free. If it had not been for Jesus Christ, I know as surely as I do that I am standing here, that my poor soul would be sizzling in hell forever and ever.

Think how long eternity is? Think how long everlasting darkness will be, with weeping and gnashing of teeth? They

say if this world was a solid ball of steel, and one of these little red house ants would crawl around it once in ten thousand years, until its tiny feet, by crawling upon the earth, would wear out the entire ball of steel, it wouldn't be day-light in *eternity as yet.* How long for turning our back on God shall we suffer in eternity? Forever and ever.'

In the twinkling of an eye, God takes the blood of Jesus Christ and washes us white as snow. Every thought, word and deed we shall give an account of; but God has given His Son as our intercessor, and for His Name's sake, if we only believe, He wipes out all our sins and sinks them in the sea of forgetfulness, never to be remembered against us again. And when we come into the presence of God, we shall see our Blessed Saviour standing on His right hand, and we shall hear Him say, "These are mine; I have redeemed them by my own precious blood, which I shed on Calvary. And we shall turn to the Father, the Great Judge (That will be the last court, men; there will be no higher court of appeals than this.); and He shall say, because of Jesus' having paid it all: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many."

I want to ask you one thing--what if the next few years don't bring any more to you than the last few have? I know you are suffering; but you have gone no farther down in sin than I have gone, and some of you have never gone so far, perhaps you never will, perhaps you will have to go farther. Maybe you will have to lose your arms, your eyes, everything, before you come to yourself; but this morning I bring to you a message out of God's word that you can be free in the twinkling of an eye. Now, you haven't made the world a much better place by living in it up to this time. If everyone had lived as you have, it wouldn't be safe for humanity to be out on the streets day or night.

Maybe this is a picture of you.' But God, in the twinkling of an eye, forgave my sins and wrote my name in heaven, and I know that when I die God will send a legion of angels and wing my soul away to everlasting glory; and you may know that you are saved just as much as you know that you are standing here this morning. He says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

If God is on our side, who can be against us? Every step you take, every mile of the way, you will hear God's voice, saying: "This is the way; walk thou in it. I am with you; I will help you; yea, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness." And in that soul of yours, you can hear the voice of Jesus, saying: "Follow me. I am going on to prepare a mansion for you; where I am, there ye may be also." You can hear His voice, saying: "I will be with you when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I have been to see the Father; and if you owe Him ought, He has placed that upon my account. Thou shalt go free."

My brother, God is looking down from His throne on high, and at this moment He is telling you that just for believing in His Son, you may dwell with Him forever.

Let us pray.