

22 November 2020 I Will Take The Children Part 11: The Turnaround - Session 1
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Scripture reference: 1 Corinthians 6:12 AMPC; 1 Corinthians 6:12 MSG; 19-20 MSG; 1 Corinthians 6:11-15 NLT; Acts 9:5-7 AMPC

Praise You, Jesus. Praise You, Lord. Praise You, Lord, praise You. Just lift your voices and just praise Jesus this morning. Praise You, Jesus. Praise You, Lord. Praise You, Lord. We give you thanks, and praise, and glory, and honour. Hallelujah. Praise the mighty name of Jesus. We rejoice in this day, this day You have made for us to give You praise. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Praise You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. Hallelujah. Glory to the Most High God, the Lord of my life. Hallelujah. He is my Healer. He is my Provider. He's my Protector. Hallelujah. Praise You, Jesus. Glory to God.

Thank you, Jesus, that You are watchful over all things pertaining to Your Word, and that everything that You speak comes to pass. As we go into the next part of the service, Lord, I thank you that You are watching over Your Word, that it will not return to You void, but it will accomplish the things that You have sent it out to do, and it will create and produce a harvest in us and in the people around us Father, we thank You, Lord, in Jesus name. Amen, amen. You may be seated. Glory to God. Hallelujah.

It's a good day to be in church, hey? Even if it's raining a bit, and it's *snoesig*. Feels like you want to stay in bed on a day like this day, but it's better to be in church on a day like this day. Then you can go and get *snoesig*, full of life, you know, hallelujah. Praise the Lord.

The message I'm preaching this morning is one that I taught in Johannesburg some weeks ago. Well, to be exact, it was the sixth of September, and I haven't had a release of the Holy Spirit to minister it in this congregation, until now. This is the morning that I am going to be ministering this particular message. I understand from the Holy Spirit and my seeking Him on this message for the Witbank congregation that it will be different, very different to the one that came out in Johannesburg.

I want to read to you from First Corinthians chapter six, verse 12, in the Amplified Bible, and it says ¹²**Everything is permissible, (allowable and lawful) for me; but not all things are helpful. They're (not good for me to do, expedient or profitable when considered with other things). Everything is lawful for me, but I will not become the slave of anything or be brought under its power. (1 Corinthians 6:12 AMPC)** This Scripture is very clear that according to the salvation and the power of your salvation, the fact that the blood of Jesus has washed you clean. When you receive Jesus, you make Him Lord of your life.

This Scripture says **everything is lawful, but not everything is profitable. Everything is lawful, but it's not good.** I want to say right upfront and you'll see, as I read through this Scripture, this is part of why many unbelievers, people who are not in the church that are not Christians, look at the church and they're very confused by the church; is because the church, by and large, wants to live in the lawful condition, not in the profitable condition.

That means that the people that get to know Jesus and have Jesus as Lord in their life, they're often living in the state of, well, God's already paid for my sin, so I can pretty much choose my own way of living my life because it's lawful. It's lawful for me to choose my own way of life, the way I want to live my life, and how I want to conduct my life, and how I want to plan my life, and how I want to do everything for me. The Bible says very clearly, it's lawful for you to do that, but it's not profitable.

Now, most Christians, when they're making a decision as to whether something's lawful, whether something's profitable, inherently, they believe that they will turn the lawful into profitable otherwise, they wouldn't do it. They think what I'm doing for myself, I'm going to make it work for me, and it's going to work well for me. It's lawful, but the Bible says that's not always expedient for you. They have a belief that if they do what's lawful, it's okay because they'll make it work for them.

There is a way of living in God that says, don't live in the lawful, live in the profitable, then it means if you're living with Him, then His responsibility is to make things profitable in your life. It's a big difference. It is a huge difference.

We're going to read from the Message Translation, it says this, ¹²**Just because something is technically legal, doesn't mean that it is spiritually appropriate. If I went around doing whatever I thought I could get by with, I'd be a slave to my whims. (1 Corinthians 6:12 TPT).**

So, if I thought I can get away with anything I want to do, then I can; then I am getting to become a slave to whatever just takes my fancy. I'm going to live my life according to what my next thought of desire for myself is. My next thing that's going to really do good for me, I'll do that. Again, this doesn't sound very dangerous, does it? Come on, this doesn't sound very dangerous. This actually sounds quite plausible, but it is dangerous because the more you live for yourself, the more you don't understand what it is to be spiritually led.

You know, the thing that God always wants me to say and always wants me to talk about, is He always wants me to continue to remind people with this question. So what's the point of being a Christian? The point of being a Christian surely is so that you don't go to hell? Staying missing hell and making heaven...good decision.

No brainer. Obviously, you know, I mean, good choice. *Maklike somme, dankie Nick*. But then after you've made Jesus, the Lord of your life, and you're going to heaven, then you enter the realm of I can do anything legally, but it's not profitable. I can do anything I want, but it doesn't necessarily mean it's spiritual. The whole point of being born again is not just so that you can miss hell and go to heaven, although *dis 'n maklike som*, but the whole point of being a Christian is so that you can become spiritual, not stay natural. It's the whole point. Become spiritual, because you're a very rare human being in the earth because you decide I want to be spiritual, not natural.

There are very few Christians that are making these quality choices; because it's very easy to live under the technically legal, it's okay lifestyle, versus the very spiritual living for God lifestyle. On the one hand, even though you're technically capable of doing everything, you just follow and do everything that you.. have a thought, I feel like doing that, I'll do that. Have a thought...I want a new car, have it in my means, we'll go trade my old car for a new car, no thought about it, just do it. It might even be in your financial planning saga every three years...I must get a new car.

Well, that's legally technically according to God. You can do this, make plans for yourself and live, but it's much more profitable for you to be spiritually led and do everything that you hear from God to do; you mean even buying cars? Yes. Even buying clothes. Now come on, Pastor John, you're taking this a bit far. No, it's not like I don't need a new shirt, so I can't go and buy a new shirt, but I live my life like this.

I don't go and look for new shirts every day. One day, I'll be standing in my cupboard, and I'll be looking and maybe I've lost a bit of weight. Praise the Lord for that. You know, and maybe I've; because I'm a public profile, big figure on TV and different channels. I'll be looking at my cupboard and I'll say, I think it's time for me to get a couple of shirts. Maybe that's going to cost me a couple of thousand rands if I'm going to turf my old shirts out and put new shirts in there so that I have a fresh look. Then I said to the Lord, "Lord, is it okay if I can go and do that.? It's like having a conversation with your wife, say "Hey, babe, I think I'm going to go and buy a couple of shirts". Well, sure, it's time, change the old ones, put the new ones. So isn't that a walk with God that you can have? So, then you just get a peace in your heart and it's like, there's no resistance about it.

Then at the very least if you can't tell the difference between your own desire and God's desire, the fact that you've asked God, already puts you in a better space because it gives God the opportunity to bless you. It also makes you realize I'm living to put God first. There's nothing wrong with doing that.

Even if sometimes you feel like, uncertain, unsure. I mean, I've made some decisions in my life, where I've paid for a trip, to go away, paid a deposit, I've paid for things, and then the time goes by and I can't get my deposit back. Then I'm just praying and the Lord says, "I don't want you to go on that." I said, "But Lord, I felt it was quite good at that time when I prayed." He said, "I know, but things have developed spiritually and now I don't want you to go." "Well, I'm going to lose all that money." "No, you don't know what else you're going to lose if you disobey Me. It's not about

the deposit, you're going to lose. I can get that back to you like that, John, that's not the issue. Obey Me because there's other things happening, that you need to miss or that I want to get to you if you stay. No brainer." But that's what comes from being spiritual.

I'm going to read a few more scriptures in the same Message Translation, verse 19 of chapter 6, one Corinthians, **¹⁹Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit?** Won't you all just say this to me? My body is a sacred place. It's the place of the Holy Spirit. Is that what the Bible says? So, does that mean that actually, if the body is the sacred place of the Holy Spirit, it's not just yours to do with whatever you choose? Yes?

I'm going to, I'm preparing you in a legal debate this morning. Legally, I'm going to push you into a spiritual corner, that you can't do anything, but you say, "Yes, your honour."

¹⁹ Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? He's talking about your body. This flesh, blood, your body, saying you can't choose to live like you want, that belongs to the Holy Spirit because Jesus paid the price for it. **¹⁹The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. ²⁰God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 MSG).**

Come on, now. Okay, let's work together. Is this the Bible? Okay, does God own your body? Let's reverse engineer this argument. Some people that have not made Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior of their lives, does the Lord own their body? He does. He paid a price for their body, He shed His blood for their body. They have just not made Him the Lord and Savior of their life. So they live as they choose. Right? Because they don't recognize that my body belongs to anybody else, but me. When Jesus paid the price for it on the cross, He paid the price for everybody. Some people just refuse to acknowledge Him as God, and that He did it.

I am a person who's, I don't know that my body doesn't belong to God. So, what's my next thought about who my body belongs to? Well, my only thought can, it belongs to me. If I'm not saved, and I don't know that my body belongs to God, it must only belong to me. So, therefore, I can do with my body whatever I want. I can do whatever pleases it. I can go with it wherever I want to go with it. I can buy for it whatever, I want, to buy for it. As long as I don't hurt anybody else and sometimes I don't care if I hurt anybody else, as long as it pleases me anyway.

Come on now. Because in their minds, my body belongs to me. Are we all together? Adults, grown-ups, you all understand that? Maybe there's little kids in here that don't fully understand that yet, but that's okay. We're all with that, right? You adults, your body belongs to you? Yes, your honour.

I'm going to read from the Living Translation, another version, slightly different passage, but including the scriptures. **¹¹Some of you were once like that. But you are cleansed; you are made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. ¹²You say, "I am allowed to do anything" but not everything is good for you. And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything. ¹³You say, "Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food. (This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them.) (1 Corinthians 6:11-15 NLT)**

The time will come when this body will no longer need a stomach, and neither will it need food to fill the stomach. It will have a glorious effect and look, but it will not require even oxygen to breathe to keep it alive. It will be only alive by the light and the life and the power of God as a spirit being will. Wow. It's quite something to think about that.

Jesus said in John chapter 4, He said, I have Bread that I eat that you know nothing about. It's the Bread of Life, that even when He was in His body, he could feed of God's Word that would sustain Him because He was already living in a place where none of His physical, the physical Word was not dictating to Him. It was only God's will that was telling Him what to do. He could literally feed His own body to a point on the Word of God.

¹³ But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. ¹⁴And God will raise us from the dead by His power, just as He raised our Lord

from the dead. ¹⁵ **Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? (1 Corinthians 6:11-14 NLT)**

So, your body, even though you're living in it, that your body's a part of Christ. Yes, you're with me? Are we all in this kind of teaching? Semi Bible-teaching court of laws scenario, here today? So, here's a big question. Big, big question.

If your body belongs to Jesus, what about our children? We belong to God, but our children don't. Our children must do what we plan for their lives because we know best for them, but actually, God's already asking us, for us to give our bodies to Him, but we want to plan our children's lives. Because social norms dictate that you will be reflected well on as a parent, if you have your child going in the right direction and set your child up for life in all the right boxes that you tick. Tick, they did sport in the first team. Tick, they were perfect. Tick, they finished school in record time. Tick, they went to university. Tick, they got colours or whatever they do. Tick, I have done everything for my kids. Tick, I'll pay for their whole university thing and buy them a car. I'll set him up for life. Tick, I'll make sure that whoever they meet will be the right person that they can marry. Huh, wonder what God's got to say about all that?

Well, here's the thing. If we are living for God, you and me, if we are living for God, where we give our bodies over to Him, and we say, "Holy Spirit, You live in us. So, I'm going to obey You in my life. Everything that this body does, I'm going to allow this body to be used by You, to bring You glory, to bring You honour and to bring life to people around us, so I'm not just a Christian, I'm also spiritual." Because when you're spiritual, you can hear the voice of God and He can use your body, your resources, your life, to bring His life into the earth so that others can be changed and see salvation.

More than that, God promised Jesus that through the church, He will display the glory of Jesus in the church to principalities and powers and rulers of darkness, while we as the church live for Christ. That's what the Bible says so that the whole spirit realm can see that Christ is in us. That all the angelic hosts, everything will be able to observe as Christians who live, not to the dictates of our bodies, but according to His Spirit.

It is possible. It is possible that God has got a plan. God's got a plan for you. That might include going to university, it might be a plan for you that might include starting a business. It might include becoming a missionary. Yeah, but I want to live a life of luxury. I don't want to be a missionary. I promise you this that if God called you to be a missionary, luxury will no longer be your agenda.

Your spirit man will change so dramatically, that you will laugh at people that have luxury for actually almost in your eyes be something of a contempt that people need luxury because God will place it in you. This desire that you can go anywhere, anyplace, anytime, sleep anywhere, anyplace, anytime, have as little food anywhere, anyplace anytime as needed to, in order to obey God, if He calls you to be a missionary. Oftentimes God calls missionaries, and they even have a sense, when they are called, their lives will be cut short because they will be taken as martyrs.

Even that, God's grace is alive in them for the moment when that happens, that they are aware that it's happening. They know that they're doing this for God and that's what happened to Stephen, isn't that right? In the moment that Stephen was being stoned to death, he looked up into the heavens, and the heavens open to him and he saw the place of heaven where his body was about to go. God had prepared him that as he's being martyred, and as he's being killed for the words that he was speaking, the gospel that he was preaching. As he was doing that, he was aware... I'm sacrificing my life for this gospel right now. My spirit is already so connected to heaven, and I'm ready to go, the pain in this body is irrelevant. I'm leaving this place as a martyr.

Because when Stephen's blood was shed, as a martyr, God had an opportunity to use his shed blood, to cry out as Abel's blood was shed, his blood was able to cry out to God for the salvation of the very people that stoned him. It's possible that God could never have actually got to those people that stoned him, had he not shed his blood and his blood, cry out for the salvation of those people.

You say, but was Jesus bloodshed, not enough? Jesus' bloodshed was so that we can be used as instruments, that in any given time, our prayers, our money, our very life blood, could be shared for His purpose on the earth.

My wife and I were talking this week. The prophetic Word of God is building very big in me at this moment, for us for this ministry, according to our assignment and according to our calling. Two of the words that He has allowed me to

speak so far is “John, I want you to be bold, and I want you to go big. Pastor Sharon, and I have had this real conversation this week. What if we sell all the assets that we have, all of them, houses, homes, motorbikes, cars, bicycles, sell it all. So, that we have the money that we need to put into this ministry, so that God can take us to the next level.

I want to tell you, that all of my material possessions have this much value to me, compared to obeying the will of God, this much. [*Pastor John shows his fingers forming a zero.*] Because I know that God is speaking to business people that have wealth, that should be pouring wealth into this project, these projects that God wants to do. If He doesn't speak, this is what we came to this conclusion. If he doesn't speak to them, we, Sharon and I, we are going to do this. We are going to do this because we are not going to get stopped because some people feel like their bodies and their houses that they're living are everything I've worked for my whole life. So, I've got to look to my future. My future means nothing to me in assets. Nothing, my assets are nothing. To do the will of the Father is everything, it's everything. Hallelujah.

You think if we did all that, you think this is a great thing. We've given away a lot of assets before, you don't even know about, but let me tell you if you think this is a big deal for God, He says, I will in this lifetime, and in the lifetime to come, reap a hundredfold return.

Let me tell you, I'm just setting myself up for greatness. When I come into the kingdom of God, I walk in there and God says, “John, come here I want to show you something you want to see, look at all this place; I have reserved for you all of this in My glorious home...all of this for you.”

Ps John answers: “Well, I don't really need it.”

God, “I know, but this is just so that you can see that this is what you did when you were on the earth, you prepared this for yourself in heaven.” If that takes too long before we come back to Earth, then I will enjoy it in heaven, but when we come back to Earth, all of that will come to earth with me. In the new heaven and the new earth in a time to come, that is yet to come. In the meantime, we got lives to touch, we got to represent the church of the Lord you as Christ on the earth, we do.”

I'm asking you today, I told you, it's going to come out differently here than it came out there, in Johannesburg. What happened in Johannesburg was, God came mightily upon me to preach a message of repentance, to ask parents to repent, for leading their children's lives and for planning their children's lives all of their years. Only to hand their lives over to the Babylonian system, as soon as they reach university level. That's okay, we'll school them, we'll educate them, we'll put values in them, and then we'll send them to university and we'll let the Babylon system influence them with all of its education and its thinking and its ideals. We think we're strong enough as a family, that we can stop that from happening.

Well, it's legally and technically possible, but it's not expedient. It's not profitable. Hallelujah.

My message to you, today is of a similar nature. The similar nature is, I'm asking you to repent. The Holy Spirit has placed it on my heart to ask you to repent. I'm not asking you to come and stand up here in the front, I don't want to violate laws. Neither am I going to ask you to even kneel where you sit in your chair. I'm going to ask you to deeply consider the implications of what this message means. Between you and God in your own time at home, I'm going to ask you by the Holy Spirit for you to repent. Repent for thinking that your body's your own to do with whatever you want. Repent from thinking that you've got your whole future planned out for yourself. Repent means to turn around, means I'm heading in this direction, [*Showing 180° change of direction*], I'm going to go in that direction.

I'm going to read to you out of a dictionary, what the Evangelical Church, what Christians considered to be repentance. *Evangelical repentance* consists of number one, a *true sense of one's own guilt and sinfulness*. I never want to get down on myself if I've sinned, because there's no point in me actually, deeply evaluating my sin, it's more likely to lead me to more sin. Even if I'm doing that to try and be remorseful about it, so that I don't do it again, then I'm already still just doing it in my own strength to try and make my own strengths, the one that makes me not sin anymore.

I'm not someone that goes and spends a lot of time on my sin. If I know that I've done something that I shouldn't have done, which could be simply, God said, "Give this person 100 rands," and I didn't, then I've already sinned, and so I don't spend time, on all of that, I just say, "Sorry, Lord, I'll do better next time." You know what I am saying? It's an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ, number two, and number three, *it's an actual hatred of disobeying God or of sinning. It's a persistent endeavour after a holy life in a walking with God, in the way of His commandments.*

So then, it goes on to say, *a true penitent is conscious of guilt, of pollution, and of helplessness, thus he apprehends himself to be just what God has always seen him to be and declares him to be. But repentance comprehends not only such a sense of sin but also an apprehension of mercy without which there can be no true repentance.*

This is a very theological definition that I'm reading to you on purpose because on purpose, religion tends to focus on how you have to be repentant of sin and become sin and guilt conscious, in order to be repentant. That's not the way Jesus said it. You may become conscious of your disobedience. You may become conscious of your ways of following yourself, rather than following God, you may be conscious of that. Repentance is a choice that you do once and then you follow that choice forever.

Will you perhaps deviate again, quite possibly. That's why God covered all the sin that He needed to cover before you were born, while you are born, and after you're born. All sin has been covered by Jesus. Amen. Hallelujah.

I'm going to just finish off this session by reading to you about a very prominent man in the Bible. Just going to read it to you, so that you got the full story. Again, I'm reading from, I don't remember the source that I got it from. It's either the Thompson's Chain-Reference, or it's the Easterns Bible Dictionary, or the Vines, or one of those, I didn't put the reference in my notes here.

This is a brief synopsis of the Apostle Paul, who was known as Saul in his life. *Saul was born about the same time as our Lord. His circumcision-name was Saul, and probably the name Paul was also given to him in infancy "for use in the Gentile world," as "Saul" would be his Hebrew home-name. He was a native of Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, a Roman province in the South-east of Asia Minor. That city stood on the banks of the River Cydnus, which was navigable thus far; hence it became a centre of extensive commercial traffic, with many countries along the shores of the Mediterranean, as well as with the countries of central Asia Minor. It thus became a city distinguished for the wealth of its inhabitants.*

Rich city, rich people. *Tarsus was also the seat of a famous University, higher in reputation even than the universities of Athens and Alexandria, the only others that then existed. Here, Saul was born, and here he spent his youth, doubtless enjoying the best education, his native city could afford. Wealthy people, best university, Sauls growing up in that system.*

His father was of the straightest sect of the Jews, a Pharisee, of the tribe of Benjamin, of pure and unmixed Jewish blood. (Acts 23:6; Phillipians 3:5). We learn nothing regarding his mother; but there is reason to conclude that she was a pious woman, and that, like-minded with her husband, she exercised all a mother influence in moulding the character of her son, so that he would afterwards speak of himself as being, from his youth up, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."

So, in other words, they are pious, Jews that lived strictly according to the law, as a Pharisee and as a tribe of Benjamite would do. Notwithstanding they lived in a very rich city, notwithstanding they lived in a very, very educated city, where the highest seat of education, probably in the whole of Asia Minor was. Could we call it a Harvard or a Yale of the world. Right? And all of the systems that supported that.

We read of his sister and his sister's son, and of other relatives. Though a Jew, his father was a Roman citizen. This is very significant. How he obtained this privilege, we are not informed. "It might be bought or won by distinguished service to the state." Which state? The Roman state, or acquired it in several other ways; at all events, his son was free born.

In other words, he was now a Jew, because he was also a Roman. He was not a slave to the Roman system. He was a free-born man. A rare, rare thing to find amongst the Jews in the occupation of the Roman Empire. All Jews were slaves to any Roman. So to live your life, in a city of wealth, with the best education and in a situation where he could just about go anywhere, do anything, say anything because if he chose to speak as a Jew, he spoke under the banner of his father's influence as a Benjamite and a Pharisee, who was well respected. If he spoke as a Roman, they couldn't touch him because he had the right to speak as a Roman, to freely speak in any situation that he wanted to.

It was a valuable privilege, and one that was to prove of great use to Paul, although not in the way in which his father might have been expected to desire him to make use of it. His father had set up all this great stuff for his family to be free, under an environment where very few people were free, and his father expected him to use it maybe for wealth, maybe for the business, to certainly in the Jewish community.

His father had a plan that he was using. *Perhaps the most natural career for the youth to follow was that of a merchant. "But it was decided that he should go to college and become a rabbi, that is a minister, a teacher, and a lawyer all in one."*

Which would have made him in our modern-day world, a judge, that was also the president. You understand? Greatest levels of influence, certainly in the Jewish community, and because of that status that he would have been in the Jewish community, he would have obviously had a privileged position in the Roman community. They were setting him up to be a guy that's like both President and Senator without term limits.

According to Jewish custom, however, he learned a trade before entering on the more direct preparation for the sacred profession. The trade he acquired was the making of tents from goats' hair cloth, a trade which was one of the commonest in Tarsus.

His preliminary education having been completed, Saul was sent, when about thirteen years of age probably, to the great Jewish school of sacred learning at Jerusalem as a student of the law. Here he became a pupil of the celebrated Rabbi Gamaliel, and here he spent many years in an elaborate study of the Scriptures, and of the many questions concerning them with which the rabbi's exercised themselves. Understanding that all of the Hebrew living, Jewish living was captive by the law of God. To understand the law of God, which was also the law of living together, was the most prominent position where you could answer with wisdom, the questions that all arise from people living together.

During these years of diligent study, he lived "in all good conscience," the way his mom and dad taught him. Unstained by the vices of that great city.

After the period of his student-life expired, he probably left Jerusalem for Tarsus, where he may have been engaged in connection with a synagogue for some years. But we find him back again in Jerusalem soon after the death of our Lord. Here he now learned the particulars regarding the crucifixion and the rise of the new sect of the "Nazarenes."

For some two years after Pentecost, Christianity was quietly spreading its influence in Jerusalem. At length Stephen, one of the seven deacons gave forth more public and aggressive testimony that Jesus was the Messiah, and this led to much excitement among the Jews and much disputation in their synagogues. Persecution arose against Stephen and the followers of Christ generally, in which Saul of Tarsus took a prominent part. He was at this time probably a member of the great Sanhedrin and became the active leader in the furious persecution by which the rulers then sought to exterminate Christianity.

Everything's coming to pass by circumstance, by education, by planning, by training, by opportunity - suddenly Saul is in the Sanhedrin. This is the privileged centre of power.

But the object of this persecution also failed. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." The anger of the persecutor was thereby kindled into a fiercer flame. Hearing that fugitives had taken refuge in Damascus, he obtained from the chief priest letters authorizing him to proceed thither on his persecuting career.

Remember, he lived in all righteousness, which means that the rabbis and the chief priests would say, "You're the right kind of guy to go and zealously take on this Crusade for us."

So, he went proceeding to Damascus. *This was a long journey of about 130 miles, which would occupy perhaps six days, during which, with his few attendants, he steadily went onward, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter." But the crisis of his life was at hand. He had reached the last stage of his journey and was within sight of Damascus. As he and his companions rode on, suddenly at midday a brilliant light shone round them, and Saul was laid prostrate in terror on the ground, a voice sounding in his ears, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" The risen Saviour was there, clothed in the vesture of his glorified humanity. In answer to the anxious inquiry of the stricken persecutor, "Who art thou, Lord?" he said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." This was the moment of his conversion, the most solemn in all his life. (Easton's Bible Dictionary)*

I read to you from Acts chapter nine. ⁵ **And Saul said, verse five. And Saul said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting. It is dangerous and it will turn out badly for you to keep kicking against the goad [to offer vain and perilous resistance]. (Acts 9:5 AMPC)** Who is he persecuting? Jesus was in heaven. Who was he persecuting? The Christians in which the Spirit of Christ was in their bodies. So his whole idea is; I kill their bodies, I kill the Spirit of this sect called Nazarenes. Right? And Jesus says to him; it will not go well with you if you continue on this course and this direction.

⁶ **Trembling and astonished he asked, Lord, what do You desire me to do? The Lord said to him, But arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do. ⁷ The men who were accompanying him were unable to speak [for terror], hearing the voice but seeing no one. (Acts 9:6-7 AMPC)** Just a few things I want to say here, in conclusion.

What happened to all of Paul's training? All of the plans that his mom and dad had for him? It's quite likely, it's quite likely that when his dad got to hear about what had come to his son, that he must have been stricken with absolute disappointment. He must have felt like, "How can I have gone through all the struggle of creating such opportunities for my son, and he has thrown them in my face by becoming one prominent member of a sect that is against the covenant of Jehovah and the covenant people, undermining our very philosophy of what we believe."

Don't you think his father was disappointed? There is no mention of it, but maybe his father did encounter the Lord Jesus through the teachings of his son. But there's no mention of it.

I tell you, I've said this before; we may have the opportunity to look after the bodies of our children, but it is incumbent on us as parents, to raise our children, directing them always to the life of Jesus. As far as possible, we are supposed to live with our bodies, controlled by the Holy Spirit, so that our children can see that we are controlled by the Holy Spirit, not by our own desires. Where it is not possible, we have to depend on the grace, and the mercy, that even our words will have an impact on our children. When we repent, we might say to them; we're not perfect in our living, but we are repentant in our hearts. Which gives them an understanding that we may also not be perfect, but we have an access to mercy. We have an access to grace, that even you as mom and dad have access to it, we have access to this.

We need to repent, not just for ourselves, that we have lived potentially, as we choose, and as we desire, but also we must repent that in many, many times we have chosen. Just chosen. Without seeking God and without knowing what the will of God is. Just chosen, just chosen.

I have one final thing to say and it comes down to me, as a messenger because in Paul's case, God chose to encounter him on the road to Damascus, in such a way that was so invasive into his physical body, that Paul could never deny the meeting. Do you understand? I want to argue this, as a court of law lawyer might argue, it is probably because he was so steeped in the law of righteousness and he was so righteous in his own good works and he was so elevated into the power base of Jewish religious influence, that unless he had encountered God with such deliberateness and such power, he would never have acknowledged any words coming from any other being.

Here's the good news; he encountered God before it was too late. God said to him, "You're on your way to a path of destruction, Saul. It will not happen and will not go well for you, but now I'm encountering you to stop the destruction." What's the destruction? Why? "Because you touch My Church, you touch My Body, you touch Me. You are about to go and try and kill what is becoming of My Body, in the earth. Now is the moment, Paul. Now, you are encountering Me. Now, you have to change. Not tomorrow, Paul, now."

He recognizes. He says, "Lord! What must I do?" He says, "You must go to a house and someone will tell you what you must do next." He could have sent an angel. He said, "Go and stay in that house and I'll send an angel to come talk to you." When his encounter with God was done, He left it up to men. He left it up to a man by the name of Ananias to come up and recognize, this is the man that's killing the Church and put his hands on his eyes so that he could be not blind anymore that he could see after being blind for three days.

This man was so fearful of Saul that he wanted to not even obey God, but God sent a man-messenger, to change his status. So that he could continue on his journey, and from that moment onwards, God spoke a lot through men-messengers to him, till he became a person that was able to hear from God, and then become a man-messenger himself. Hallelujah.

That is my function, for me and Pastor Sharon, Pastor Christi and the other leaders in the church, it is our function that we are messengers of God to encourage you to have encounters with Him. We cannot encounter God on your behalf. Only you can encounter God for yourself. To the measure that you encounter God, and the ongoing encounter you will have with Him will be dependent on, often, how you work with His messengers.

Even when God was getting ready to send Paul as an apostle, He made him come from the desert, back to Damascus, back to Jerusalem, and come and share all the revelations that he had received. Whilst he was in the desert, what was he doing? He had this brilliant mind, so I've heard some people say, I don't know where they get their information, but some people have read the books of scholars, of Jewish scholars. He had this brilliant mind that was almost like a photographic memory. Mind you, most Jewish kids, by the age of seven could recite the Torah, recite word for word, the Torah, by the age of seven. He had his brilliant mind where he probably went into the desert, led by God, first of all, to escape, because now he became the greatest threat to the Jews because he's converted.

I can imagine him sitting in the desert and thinking Isaiah 53 - yes, He was going to be crucified, yes, He was going to be beaten, yes, His stripes. That's what happened to Jesus, Isaiah, Jesus, I see it, Lord. I see all the prophecies. Psalm 23, my Good Shepherd, I see this, I see all of it. I could see him sitting untainted by conversations with people, just sitting there, going through the whole of the Old Testament, and all the prophecies of Amos, and all the prophecies: "And there shall become upon my people, this special thing and they will prophesy and there will be people as drunk. Oh, that's what happened in Acts in Jerusalem, when I was there before, I saw and I heard about that, right before Stephen was martyred.

I can see Paul putting the Old Testament together in the life of Jesus. As he's doing that, he's saying: "and so this is what grace means, and this is what mercy means. If this is what grace means, this is what the body of Christ means. If this is what that means, then the whole of Gentiles are ready to hear the gospel. Jesus places in him this burning desire to go back to Gentiles. Why? Because he's a Jew that's free-born. In one second, in an encounter with God, all of his university, high born education, free men's stuff became irrelevant, because God's plan for him became the relevant.

Now, I want to tell you that this message belongs to you because let me tell you, there is nothing greater that you can do than to ask God, encounter me, God, encounter me. I'm asking You to encounter me, and if it means that you have to go on a fast - and we may very well be going into fast not too long from now, - but because it's in our hearts to do it for me and me and pastor Sharon, because of the significance of what God is doing amongst us.

You might say, I want You to encounter me Father, and I'm going to keep speaking this out of my mouth. Every day I'm saying "Father, I'm willing, ready and able to encounter You. I'm asking You to encounter me, encounter me with Your life, encounter me with Your light, encounter me with Your word, encounter me with Your power. When You encounter me, I give you permission, I am asking You to undo radically all of my cultural baggage that I've got, all of

my intellectual theological baggage that I've got. I'm asking you that when You encounter me, You put a fire in me, You will put me ablaze in such a way, that from that moment onwards, I will follow You, with everything I've got."

This message is for you. I'm asking you, to ask God, that if you are not capable of repenting today or repenting yet, He can make you willing. He can make you willing, to give up all of the stuff that you have planned for your life. Let me tell you, I don't care how old you are or how young you are. God is in the business of using people. Little people, older people. I mean, God is so amazing that he had to birth a prophet that was untainted, and unquestionably a prophet. So, He chooses a man by the name of Zechariah, a really upright religious man, and a woman by Elizabeth, who are way past childbearing years, and they've been barren all these years, and in this late part of her life, He says you are going to have a son.

Zachariah is about to actually make noises about how possible this is. God says I'm going to make you dumb. "*No speaky you, no speaky you, till baby born,*" because I can't have your words, stop what I must bring. Your age is not relevant to me, your vessels belong to me. I can bring life to old vessels for a moment to bring a child into the earth so that whatever needs to be done, needs to be done. That the miracle of childbirth without a man, is the same as a miracle of a 50-year old woman that cannot bring forth a child, can bring forth the child suddenly. That there is one that can stand and say, here comes the Son of man. Here comes the Son of God. Here comes the Messiah.

John the Baptist, he was born into doing what? Repent, you repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand, repent! What's about to happen? An encounter with God is about to happen. You must repent! What must we do, John? Get baptized. He wasn't actually baptizing them from their sins, he was baptizing them to prepare them, in readiness for the Lamb that was coming.

That's my job. That's our job, and we must encourage each other continually. It's time to encounter God. It's time to live in our encounters with God, it's time to live with God in such a way that we live everything with Him.

I ask you, to stand with me right now. You remember, when I told you about my own personal encounters with God, and that I've never had an identity crisis, because let me tell you when you're encountering God at seven, and He fills you with His spirit, you know that He's living there. When you're 14,15, and He shows up in your bedroom, and He calls you into the ministry, you can never go back from that, in the same way, that the Apostle Paul could never forget the bright, shining light and the power and the magnificence and the glory of the voice that says, "Saul, you can't keep doing this, it will be bad for you. I love you because of your commitment to Me through the law, but you got to change."

It's time. It's time. I'll tell you, the world is going to get darker, and it's our time to get brighter. It's our time to live, big in God, and to live with a boldness of encounters with Him, that no matter where you find yourself, you are ready, in a moment. Speak about Jesus, live for Jesus, hallelujah.

Would you put your hand on your heart, please? Say, I'm a son of God, and I ask You today Father, through the Person of the Holy Spirit, I'm ready for an encounter with Your presence, with Your Word, and with the plans You have for my life, and for all of those that are around me, that are precious and dear to me, in Jesus' name, Amen. Hallelujah.

May your day be filled with the glory of God. May your heart be filled, filled with love for God, that this message doesn't condemn you or shame you or make you feel guilty, but it inspires you and it motivates you. It causes a fire to burn in your heart so that you want more of God. That is not about repentance and all about that stuff, but it's about being on fire for God because I now know Him more than I ever knew Him before.

Hallelujah. May your week be filled with that kind of amazing grace of God. His amazing love and presence be upon you. Blessed going out, blessed coming in, blessed because His words are on your mouth. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Do you agree with me today? Do you receive this today? Amen. Thank you for coming. God bless you all.