

Gospel Power



"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation..." (Romans 1:16)

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No. 24

If The Seed Is Planted

Bill Hall

Think about this one: "Men can know how many seed are in an apple, but only God knows how many apples are in a seed." This is the message that appeared on a sign recently. How true! If the seed is planted a tree may result which through the years may bear thousands of apples, each one of them containing seed that can produce even more apples. It is conceivable that millions of apples are in a seed.

The seed of the kingdom "is the word of God (Luke 8:11). It is impossible to know how many Christians may result from the planting of the word in the heart of one individual. Fourteen years ago the word was planted in the heart of a teenager who was dating a Christian. That teenager is now approaching 30, and is married to the girl he was dating. He has brought his father, mother, sister-in-law, grandfather and grandmother to the Lord. He with his wife are teaching their two children. He is already preaching as opportunities arise and will likely some day preach on a full-time basis. It is impossible to know how many apples were in that seed; or in the seed when it was planted in that girlfriend's heart before him.

Ananias was hesitant to preach to Saul of Tarsus: "Lord, I have heard from many about this man" (Acts 9:13). With the Lord's assurance,

however, he went. Can you imagine how many "apples" were in that seed? In fact, that seed is still producing through the epistles that Saul of Tarsus (Paul) wrote.

Sometimes no Christians result from the planting of the seed. Or one may result that proves to be unfruitful. Jesus made that clear in His parable of the sower. The seed produces only when it is planted in a "noble and good heart," Jesus said (Luke 8:15). This is the soil that will be productive.

But one cannot know the productiveness of the soil until he has sown the seed. There is a difference here between the physical and the spiritual. In physical realms one may correctly judge whether soil would be productive or not. But not in spiritual realms. Who among us, if we had lived in the first century, would have thought that Saul would be fertile ground for the gospel? Or Simon the sorcerer? Or the Samaritan woman? It seems that the first century Christians understood this principle, so they preached to anybody and everybody who would listen. We must do the same, preaching to rich, poor, black and white, good and bad, educated and uneducated, and wait for the results to gauge the quality of the soil.

If the seed is planted. These become the

keywords. What a tragedy had Ananias not gone to Saul or had Philip not gone to Samaria. What a tragedy had someone not taken the time to plant the seed in the teenager mentioned

above. We must seize the opportunities that arise and plant the seed. God will give the increase. And you might be surprised at how many “apples” prove to be in the seed.

~via *Market Street Bulletin*, Athens, Alabama



Saul: An Enemy Becomes A Friend – (Acts 22:4-16)

Jon Quinn

He is called by two names in the New Testament; “Saul” is his Hebrew name which means “asked for” and was also the name of Israel’s first king a thousand years before, and like king Saul, the Saul of the New Testament was also of the tribe of Benjamin. But he is known best by his Roman name “Paul” which means “little”. He was born in Tarsus in the region of Cilicia. It is thought that he was born into a favored family for several reasons. First, he was born a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37). Second, he was privileged to have been instructed under the leading educator of the day, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Thirdly, he was a “Pharisee of Pharisees” and a voting member of the Sanhedrin, which was the ruling council of the Jews (Acts 26:10). And finally, he was entrusted with authority as a defender of the Jewish faith to imprison any who were found to be Christians (Acts 22:4). In short, he had everything going for him: Status, privilege, power, respect from others, education and a great potential for advancement. Yes, this man was going to go places; but no one, not even Saul himself, had the faintest idea what the future held. Only the Lord knew that, because He knew Saul’s heart and character. He was trustworthy, zealous, noble and he had the integrity to change his life around and even turn it upside down if that proved to be the right thing to do. And that is exactly what happened.

Saul Meets His Enemy

“And I persecuted the Way unto death, binding and putting both men and women into

prisons...And it came about that I was on my way to Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished. And...a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And I answered, “Who art Thou, Lord?” And He said to me, “I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting”...And I said, “What shall I do, Lord?” (Acts 22:4-10). This was certainly an unforeseen turn of events! But it would certainly take something like this to cause a dedicated man such as Saul to turn his whole life in the opposite direction so suddenly. Nothing else can explain the change in Paul’s life. As we have already seen, he had everything going for him, and he is about to give it all up for Jesus! He is about to say “good-bye” to his status, prestige and power and “hello” to prisons, persecution and poverty. And after it is all done, he will write about how happy he was to have made such a choice, how spiritually rich and joyful he had become and about how wonderfully bright his eternal future with the Lord would be.

When Was Saul Saved?

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service; even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly, in unbelief...” (1 Timothy 1:12,13). The Lord extended mercy and saved Saul not by ignoring his sins and

transgressions but by sending the word to him. It was still up to Saul to respond by faith to be saved and that is exactly what he did. He had “acted ignorantly, in unbelief” but was not saved until he acted knowingly in belief!

When was Saul saved? Some say on the road to Damascus, as soon as he accepted in his heart as true that Jesus was indeed the Lord. I suppose that this would be about the time he said, “What would you have me to do, Lord?” there on the road. This is a popular view with those who say that salvation is by “faith alone” and if faith alone saves us then that is probably the time Saul was saved.

Of course, it could have been later, at Damascus that Saul - actually prayed for Jesus to save him. Some say that to be saved we must “ask the Lord into our hearts”. The Bible says that after Saul, who had been blinded by the light, was led to Damascus that “he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank” and that he was “praying” (Acts 9:8-11). If we are saved by asking the Lord into our hearts then that may well have been when Saul was saved.

Actually, the Bible proves beyond any doubt that Saul was saved at neither of the above mentioned times. He was yet in his sins. After accepting the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and after three days of praying Saul is still without salvation! The Lord told a devout Christian, Ananias, to go and talk with Saul. He was told to lay his hands on Saul so that he might regain his sight because he was God’s chosen instrument to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:10-16). Ananias did exactly as the Lord instructed. He told Saul of the Lord’s plans for his future. And then, after all this, Ananias, sent by the Lord himself, said the following: “And now, why do you delay? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16). Saul was not saved until he was baptized to wash away his sins! In this act of obedience he called upon the name of the Lord. This is when the Bible says he was saved.

Saul’s Baptism

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death?” (Romans 6:3). This is how Saul later looked at his baptism. It was at that point that he was placed “into” Christ and gained access to the benefits of His death. It was from baptism that he arose to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

Of course there is no such thing as a literal washing away of sins by the power of water. The “washing away” of sins is another way to say that ones sins are being forgiven. Saul’s sins were forgiven when he was baptized, and it was by the power of God. Before Saul’s baptism, we find him mourning and fasting. After his baptism, we find him beginning his new life. When Saul was baptized, he was not relying on the water, but on the Lord upon whose name he was calling in the act of faith that the Lord Himself has prescribed (Mark 16:15,16).

~via *Expository Files*, Volume 8 No. 5

News & Notes

THE SICK: *Willie Ridgeway* is in the ECM hospital room 158 ...*Judy Williams’ father, Herbert Kazzire*, was taken back to the Druid City Hospital in Tuscaloosa on Friday after being dismissed on Wednesday...*Jerry Dickey’s mother, Pat Dickey*, is in the ECM hospital in Florence, room 682 ...*Angie McCrary’s aunt, Irma Newton*, is not doing well in the nursing home...*Angie McCrary* found that the numbing spells she has been having is due to her blood sugar levels dropping rapidly...*Hoyt Hammond* went back to the doctor this week and is to go back for further tests on July 2nd...*Arvel Newton’s nephew, Chester Newton*, is at home sick battling cancer... *Kerry Cox’s sister-in-law, Evie Lowman*, had surgery in Birmingham at UAB hospital on

Thursday and is doing well ...Remember **Millinea Word** as she continues her chemo treatments... **Wanda Tucker's father, Billy Letson**, who is continuing to take medication for his Leukemia ..**Helen Trousdale and Gurtie Snoddy's niece, Martha Henson**, who is battling cancer ..**Sheila Goode & Lou Ann Phillips mother, Shirley Slaton**, is nearing the end of her treatments for her cancer... **Sandra Glass' cousin, Tina Strickland**, who is continuing her treatments for her cancer ... **Mattie Blanche Word** who continues at home and not able to be out...**Aldeen Noles** who is not able to be out ... **Gurtie Snoddy** who is in the Mitchell-Hollingsworth Nursing Home ..**Mary Best's nephew, Shannon Johnson**, who is at home ... **Tisha Thomas' grandmother, Nellie Hunter**, and **Millinea Word's mother, Nola McCafferty**, who are both in the Meadow Brook Nursing Home in Pulaski.

SYMPATHY: We want to express our deepest sympathy to **Tisha Thomas and all the Tate family** in the passing of Tisha's grandmother, **Leadie Tate**, this past Friday morning. Her graveside service was Saturday afternoon.

COMMUNICATION GROUPS: Tonight is the night for Communication group 4 to meet. If you are in group four remember to meet this evening.

GOSPEL MEETINGS & VBS: The **Midway church** in Greenhill will begin a meeting today and it will continue through Friday with **Sewell Hall** preaching. Services will be at 7:30 tonight and at 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday...The **Hollings Gin church** near Ardmore is beginning a meeting today and it will continue through Friday of this week with different speakers: Sunday- **Jeff Mathis**; Monday - **Wes Brown**; Tuesday- **Lowell Sallee**; Wednesday- **Shane McGregor**; Thursday- **Jeff May**; Friday- **Mike Waters**. Services will begin at 7:00 p.m Monday through Friday...**College View church** in Florence is beginning a Vacation Bible School on Monday and it will continue through Friday with **Jeff May** speaking to the adult class. Services will begin 10:00 each morning.

Gospel POWER

is published in interest of New Testament Christianity and to enhance the work of the Anderson church.

Schedule of Services

Sunday

Bible Classes 9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship 10:45 a.m.
Evening Worship 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Classes 7:00 p.m.

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