

Remnant Life Church  
Sunday, January 31, 2016  
**The Purpose Given to Every Christian**  
Acts 26:12-18

- Being a Christian begins with it being about us but it immediately then becomes about others
- The Great Commission given in **Matt. 28:16-20** was not only for the disciples – it was for everyone who knows Him
- But what does that mean?
  - Do you have to be a professional minister?
  - Do you have to go to another country?
  - Do you need to go door to door handing our tracts
  - Do you need to stand on a street corner and preach?
- You could do all of these things, they are not necessary to fulfill the GC
- Paul gives an account of how he came to meet Jesus and within it we are given the method, the reason we are to share Jesus
  
- Background
  - The time is the conclusion of Paul's third missionary journey – approx. 53-57 AD
  - He had spent 3 of the 4 years of the trip in Ephesus by far the longest amount of time he had spent in one place in his journeys (**Acts 20:31**)
  - After leaving there he ends up spending a week in the port city of Tyre (modern day southern Lebanon) and here is encouraged and even prophesied for him not to go to Jerusalem because of the plots to do him harm
  - When he arrives in Jerusalem the Christians and leaders of the church warmly welcome him (**21:17**)
  - They are also aware of his ministry to the Gentiles and are very happy with what he has accomplished (**21:19-20**)
  - But they were concerned and even a little wary of him due to what he had been preaching and his past
  - He is asked to sponsor 4 Gentile men who are taking the Nazarite vow (**Num 6:1-21**) to prove he still supports the law (**21:24**)
  - He does this and then goes to the temple for his own time of purification (**21:26**)
  - There he is falsely accused of defiling the temple by taking in a Gentile man into the inner courts – a penalty of death (**21:28-29**)
  - Paul is rescued from the mob by Roman soldiers but taken into custody (**21:32-35**)
- In **Acts 22** he defends himself against the charges to the mob and the Roman officials (Paul's trials nearly mirror those of Jesus)
  - He is shackled and about to be flogged (**22:24**)
  - He reveals to them that he is a Roman citizen (**22:25**)
  - They stop since Romans only flogged non-citizens
- Paul is then taken before the Sanhedrin (**22:30**)
  - Comes from the Greek meaning "sitting together" also the root of our word "assembly"

- Comprised of between 23 and 71 men and found in every major city in Israel
- Made up primarily of Pharisees and Sadducees the ruling religious leaders
- They made all the decisions related to religious matters which the Romans felt the issue with Paul was
- Paul stirred them up so much with one statement that he had to be taken away a second time under guard (23:6-10)
- Paul is next taken to Judea before the Roman governor Marcus Antonius Felix
  - The Jews brought Tertullus an attorney with them (24:1) to try and get Paul convicted of some crime
  - Their evidence was flimsy at best and Felix refused to act on it but talked many times with Paul over the next 2 years (24:25-26)
  - When Felix left office, as a favor to the Jewish leaders, he left Paul in prison (24:27)
  - With a new governor, Porcius Festus, now in place Paul is immediately (3 days) brought before him and once again lies are told in an effort to convict him
  - Paul pleads his rights as a Roman citizen and demands to be taken before Caesar (25:10-12)
- Before he can go to Rome he is brought before King Agrippa
  - Marcus Julius Agrippa was the 7<sup>th</sup> and last king in the family of Herod the Great (the man who ordered the death of the infants in an effort to kill Jesus as a newborn – Matt 2:16)
  - It is in his defense of himself that Paul recounts, for the third time, his conversion on the road to Damascus
  - Paul is then sent to Rome where he is eventually imprisoned and executed
- It is Paul's account to Agrippa that gives us the purpose of sharing Jesus with others
- **READ – Acts 26:12-22**
  1. God tells us to Go and Tell (26:17)
    - Too many Christians believe that their responsibility ends with the conclusion of the Sunday service
    - The reality is that the time in church is the least of what we are called to do
    - This is not to say that church is not important (it is very important)
    - But God tells us that He is sending us – meaning to the world outside of church requiring action
    - 4 elderly women sitting outside
    - Without our active witness how will people know that we are alive in Christ?
  2. The reason we tell them is so that their eyes may be opened (26:18a)
    - These are spiritual eyes – the eyes of the heart to know the truth of God
    - In Luke 24 Jesus is walking with 2 men on the road to Emmaus (7 miles outside of Jerusalem) after his resurrection
    - Luke 24:31 – Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him...
    - Eye – (original Greek) - the eye of the mind; the faculty of knowing
    - They will have their eyes opened by three things
      - < The power of the Holy Spirit
      - < What they see you do

- < What they hear you say
  - We are partners with the Holy Spirit – it is not up to us
3. How? By turning them (26:18b)
- From the darkness to the light (26:18c)
  - Darkness is the natural state of sin and satan keeps people there through deception
  - This is why eyes need to be opened
  - Without forgiveness they are lost and doomed to an eternity apart from God's love
  - We must come back to a place of realizing the horror of this
  - Satan is working overtime (especially through Hollywood) to alter his public image
  - "Lucifer" – a new show on TV
    - < Lucifer Morningstar (from the Latin translation)
    - < Description: He is bored and unhappy as the Lord of Hell; he resigns his throne and abandons his kingdom to live in Los Angeles, where he gets his kicks helping the LAPD punish criminals
  - Like Harry Potter it is designed to remove the true nature of what sin is and make it appealing and non-threatening
  - satan wants you to believe his lies because what God wants is for all people to turn from satan to Himself (26:18d)
  - Only a person realizing their need for God and asking Him to forgive their sins and then come and live in their hearts will save them for eternal torment
    - < Several references in Matthew to the sinner being thrown out into the darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth
    - < Gnashing of teeth is synonymous with constant torment
  - The only hope, for anyone, is to turn from darkness to light
  - The source of that light is in God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ
- So what kind of a church are we?
  - By church I don't only mean us as a group but in each of our own lives
  - Church has come to mean only the collective of Christians but church is each of us as individuals as well
  - Are we committed to seeking out, watching for, and embracing every opportunity God gives us to share His message of salvation?
  - What do people think of you when they see how you act and what you say
  - **READ** - "*Prostitute Birthday Party*"
  - **AGAIN** – what kind of a church are we?
  - What kind of a church are you?
  - I want to be the kind of church that throws birthday parties for prostitutes at 3:30 in the morning.

## A Birthday Party for A Prostitute at 3:30 in the Morning

Tony Campolo, is a professor of sociology at Eastern College, tells the story of his visit to Honolulu for a Christian Conference. On his first night there, he awoke sometime after three (a six hour time difference had confused his sleep pattern) and left the hotel in search of a place to get something to eat. Eventually he found a tiny coffee shop. He walked in and sat down. Here is his description of the events:

The heavy-set guy behind the counter came over and asked me, "What do you want?" I told him I wanted a cup of coffee and a donut. As I sat there munching on my donut and sipping my coffee at 3:30 in the morning, the door suddenly opened, swung wide and to my discomfort in marched 8 or 9 provocatively dressed and rather boisterous prostitutes. It was a small place and so they ended up sitting all around and on either side of me. Their talk was rough, loud and crude. I felt completely out of place. I was just about to make my getaway when I heard the woman sitting next to me say to one of the other women, "You know, tomorrow is my birthday. I'm going to be 39." Her friend responded in a rather nasty tone, "So what do you want from me? A birthday party? Do you want me to get a cake, and sing happy birthday to you?" "Come on," the women sitting next to me said, "why do you have to be so mean? I'm just telling you, that's all. Why do you have to put me down? I was just telling you that it is my birthday. I don't want anything from you. I mean, why should I have a birthday party? I've never had a party in my whole life. Why should I have one now?"

When I heard what she had said, I made an immediate decision. I sat and waited until the woman left and then I called over to the counter to the guy and asked him, "Do they come in here every night?" "Yeah," he answered. "The one right next to me," I asked, "does she come in here every night?" "Yeah," he said, "that's Agnes. Yeah, she comes in here every night. Why do you want to know?" "Because," I replied, "I heard her say that tomorrow's her birthday. What do you say we do something special for her? What do you think about throwing a birthday party for her, right here in the diner?" The barest hint of a smile crept over his chubby cheeks and he answered with a measured delight, "That's a great idea. I like it. Agnes is one of those people who is really nice and kind but I don't think anybody's ever done anything nice and kind for her." "Well, look" I told him "if it is OK with you, I'll be back here tomorrow morning at 2:30. I'll decorate the place. I'll even get a birthday cake for her." "No way," he barked, "the birthday cake, that's my thing. I'll bake the cake."

At two-thirty the next morning I was back at that diner. I picked up some crepe paper and other decorations at the store, and made a sign of big pieces of cardboard that read, "Happy Birthday, Agnes!" I decorated the diner from one end to the other. I had that place really looking great. But the word must have somehow gotten out on the street because by 3:15 that morning it seemed that every prostitute in Honolulu was there. There were wall-to-wall prostitutes - and me. At 3:30 on the dot, the door of the diner swung open and in came Agnes and her friends. I had everybody ready; after all, I was sort of the informal master of ceremonies of this whole affair. So when they came I had everybody jump up and scream and we sang, "Happy birthday, Agnes!" And you know, I have never seen a person so flabbergasted, so stunned, and so shaken. Her mouth fell open, her knees started to buckle, her friend had to offer her arm to steady her, and I noticed that she had started to cry.

Well when the birthday cake with all the candles was brought out, that's when she just lost it. She started sobbing. Harry behind the counter gruffly mumbled, "Blow out the candles, Agnes, blow out the candles." Then he handed her a knife, and ordered, "Cut the cake, Agnes." Agnes looked down at that cake, and then without taking her eyes off it, she slowly and softly said, "Look, Harry, is it all right with you if I, I mean, if I don't, what I want to ask, is it OK if I keep the cake a little while? Is it all right if we don't eat it right away?"

Harry shrugged and answered, "Sure, Agnes, that's fine, you want to keep the cake, keep the cake. It yours - take it home if you want." "Could I?" she asked. Looking at me she said, "Look, I live just down the street a couple doors; I want to take the cake home, is that OK? I'll be right back, honest." So she got off her stool, picked up that cake, and carried it out of that diner like it was a precious piece of fine crystal. She made her way slowly toward the door, and we all just stood there ... speechless. Even after the door had closed behind her, there was a stunned silence in the place.

Not knowing what else to do, I broke the silence and said, "Well, what do you say we pray together?" Now...looking back on that, it seems more than a little strange that a sociologist from eastern Pennsylvania would be leading a prayer meeting with a bunch of prostitutes in a diner in Honolulu at 3:30 in the morning. But I prayed. I prayed for Agnes. I prayed for her salvation. I prayed that her life would be changed, and that God would be good to her. And when I finished, Harry leaned over, and with more than a trace of hostility in his voice he said, "Hey, you never told me you were a preacher. What kind of preacher are you anyway? What church do you belong to?" And in one of those rare moments when just the right words come, I answered him quietly, "I belong to a church that throws birthday parties for prostitutes at 3:30 in the morning." Harry looked at me, and then almost sneering as he answered said, "No you don't; there aren't any like that. In fact, if there were, that's a church even I'd go to."