

BACK TO THE BASICS OF FAITH

Preparation for The Extraordinary

In 1Corinthians 3:10 (NKJV), the Apostle Paul made a wonderful statement of which I've referenced many, many times in my teachings. He said "*10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.*" One of the things that is so extraordinary about this verse is the fact that Paul refers to him as a "*wise master builder*".

He was not leading us to believe that he was a wise and skilled builder on his own, but said in effect, I am what I am because of the grace of God that was given to me. This same grace that was given to Paul-has been also given to us.

Paul was not always a "*wise master builder*". At one time he was a very foolish one. He was a fanatical Pharisee who was so zealous for religious law that he actually persecuted and slaughtered thousands of innocent people, simply because they did not adhere to the doctrine that he and many people of his time followed and believed. Before his infamous "*Road to Damascus*" transformation, he believed that Jesus Christ, the very embodiment of love, was a symbol of arrogance, a deceiver of the people, and one who preferred the company of sinners. Paul abhorred anyone or anything associated with Christ, and he set about a course to purge the land and the nation from all those who believed that Jesus was Lord.

Paul had allowed his personal beliefs to saturate every fiber of his consciousness, and could not...would not be persuaded by anyone that he was wrong. From the top of his head to the tips of his toes he was flooded with emotional darkness, the kind that gave way to death and destruction. He plotted to find, follow, and bring the Jesus followers to his brand of justice, but that plan was intercepted on the Road to Damascus.

As Paul approached Damascus, a brilliant light from heaven beamed around him, illuminating his encounter with the love of Christ for the very first time. He immediately fell to the

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ground in terror, hearing a voice from heaven that he had never heard before. It was Jesus Christ!

He at that moment knew that Jesus was alive, that his love was real! In one instance the love of Christ cut through years of darkness to redeem the person that Jesus knew Paul could be. The knowledge of Christ flooded his understanding and shorted out his senses. Inwardly Paul was shattered and everything he had so fervently believed turned to mush.

Paul was reborn! The person he knew himself to be had collapsed, and he became “new” in Christ Jesus. When he stood to his feet, he had been literally both blinded and illuminated by the glorious light of Christ. He had to be led by the hand to Damascus. For what must have been three agonizing yet wondrous days Paul neither ate nor drank. He had to totally rebuild his mental perception of life and his purpose in it.

In his past, Paul had been emotionally crippled by a wrong system of believing, but even so, he was always very interested in building a solid foundation of knowledge. He was zealous for an understanding of his religion, his culture, his heritage, and also those whom he perceived to be his enemies. So when Jesus spoke to him by identifying himself as the Christ, Paul knew exactly who “*the Christ*” was.

To Paul, acquiring spiritual knowledge through study and meditation was not a foreign concept; he had just studied and meditated upon the wrong spiritual knowledge from the wrong source. He had learned to focus on darkness, death, and destruction rather than light, life, and liberty. God knew that he could withstand such a shock to the system as the “*Road to Damascus*” experience, because Paul possessed the mental framework to quickly and wisely rebuild. It was the context of which he could replace his faulty theology with one built on the love of Christ.

This is exactly what you and I must do to succeed in life and go higher. If we are moving at a snail's pace to what we desire, we must be willing to give up the old for the new spiritual revelation from God. It's revelation that will set our souls on fire and prepare us to embrace the extraordinary.

Listen to the biblical record of Paul's encounter:

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Acts 22:1-16 NLT

"Brothers and esteemed fathers," Paul said, "listen to me as I offer my defense." 2 When they heard him speaking in their own language,* the silence was even greater. 3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. At his feet I learned to follow our Jewish laws and customs very carefully. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just as all of you are today. 4 And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, binding and delivering both men and women to prison. 5 The high priest and the whole council of leaders can testify that this is so. For I received letters from them to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, authorizing me to bring the Christians from there to Jerusalem, in chains, to be punished.

6 "As I was on the road, nearing Damascus, about noon a very bright light from heaven suddenly shone around me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'

8 " 'Who are you, sir?' I asked. And he replied, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, the one you are persecuting.' 9 The people with me saw the light but didn't hear the voice.

10 "I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that you are to do.'

11 "I was blinded by the intense light and had to be led into Damascus by my companions. 12 A man named Ananias lived there. He was a godly man in his devotion to the law, and he was well thought of by all the Jews of Damascus. 13 He came to me and stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And that very hour I could see him!

14 "Then he told me, 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and hear him speak. 15 You are to take his message everywhere, telling the whole world what you have seen and heard. 16 And now, why delay? Get up and be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on the name of the Lord.'

On the road to Damascus, Paul was not punished right then and there, which he aptly deserved. He should have been punished for the things he had done to God's people and for the way that he had felt about Christ. He should have been obliterated on the spot, but Jesus didn't do that. Through the grace of God, Paul was pruned for a destiny far more rich than he had the right to expect.

You see, throughout his lifetime Paul had cultivated something of which God could work with. He took the important things in life extremely serious. Old school saints would say that

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God was grooming him all along. One thing is for sure, God certainly had the foreknowledge that Paul would persecute followers of Christ to the extent that he did, and even though Paul did these terrible things, God still had an extraordinary plan for his life.

There was nothing random or chaotic about how God dealt with Paul; his steps were ordered. He was propelled forward by his desire to please God and to know the Father's Will for his life. When we have destiny on our back, and we have a burning desire to know more, the extraordinary will track us down and run us over with blessings. Have the nerve to release the old; have an even bigger nerve to embrace the new, and step into what He has in store for you.