

44. Not the destination, but the motivation

March 15, 2009

When great missionary David Livingstone of Africa died, there was a huge funeral procession that was heading to Westminster Abbey for his burial in London, England. One elderly man in the crowd near that great chapel was crying uncontrollably.

Curiosity got the best of the man who was standing next to this crying man finally ask, "Did you know Dr. Livingstone in person?" "Oh, yes," the man answered between his sobbing. "We grew up together in Lanarkshire, Scotland. We both went to Africa when we were young. I went there for the gold of Africa, but he went there for the souls of Africa. Today I can not help but realize that I've been wondering after the wrong world." He was concentrating in temporal while Dr. Livingstone was concentrating in eternal.

We can safely say the same thing about apostle Paul – in my opinion, he was the greatest missionary in human history. Last Sunday I mentioned that the Lord knocked down Paul from his horse on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians there according to Acts chapter 9. While he was flat on his back, he asked two most important questions to Jesus that every single human being should ask:

Acts 9:3-6 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. 4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." 6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Saul of Tarsus asked the first question to Jesus: "Who are you, Lord?" We must know the Lord. I am not talking about knowing about Jesus Christ. Many people know about Him in somewhat ambiguity ways. But they still have nothing to do with Him and will end up in hell. We all need to settle this question in our hearts as soon as possible. Some of you may not know Him as your Savior and Lord at this moment. I will give you an opportunity to know Him at the end of the service.

The second question "Lord, what do You want me to do?" should be asked by every single born-again Christian, but unfortunately many people don't. They know that they are saved by the grace of God without doubt. But they still love their earthly lives more than living for Jesus and they are not interested in doing the work of God.

Do you know the purpose of your life on this earth? Your existence was not started accidentally by your mom and dad. My mama told me that she and my dad didn't plan to have another child. Then I came along. To their eyes, I was an "Oops," but in our God's eyes, I was planned to do His work.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Apostle Paul's questions were answered by God through a godly man named Ananias of Damascus. By the way, this Ananias was not the same dude who tried to con God and the apostles and ended up dying in Acts chapter 5:

Acts 9:15-17 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 For I

will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." 17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

If there was anyone who had a right to brag about his achievements in Christ Jesus, it would have been apostle Paul. He wrote 13 Books of the New Testament. Many Bible scholars believe that the Book of Hebrews was also written by Paul due to the similar writing style like his other letters. If that is the case, he wrote more than a half of the New Testament. Let's read a small portion of his resume:

2 Corinthians 12:1-6 It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- 4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. 5 Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. 6 For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.

Even with all the accomplishments in his life by the Holy Spirit, apostle Paul was one of the most humble men on this earth. Paul had mastered the art of balancing healthy confidence with appropriate humility.

A. PAUL THE SERVANT OF GOD

Romans 15:17-19 Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. 18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient-- 19 in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

If you are like me, when you read v17, you have to wonder what the word 'glory' means here. The Greek word for glory is "kauchesis". It means 'to boast' or 'to rejoice'.

The very power of the Holy Spirit had been working through Paul, giving him a powerful ministry. Note the word 'power' in v19, please. The original Greek word for this is 'dunamis' where we get the word 'dynamite'.

Through the enablement by the Lord Jesus, apostle Paul could extend his ministry from Jerusalem to Illyricum without help of the modern technologies. Illyricum is the region of modern Yugoslavia and Albania. In addition to that, in the Holy Spirit's power, he had worked many miracles and signs. Paul clearly understood that all the things happened in his ministry were done by the Lord, not himself. Consequently he didn't name the ministry after his name. He was boasting about the divinely-accomplished effectiveness of his calling, not himself.

Was he proud of the miracles and signs he performed in his ministry? Absolutely not. Was he proud how many churches he planted? Not even close. The most important aspect and the ones he boasted about was that the Gentiles were coming

to Christ and living in obedience to Him through what he said and did. His joy was not on account of what he had done, rather in what God had done through him.

Many believers in Christ still are into signs and wonders. Rather than knowing the Miracle Maker Jesus Christ, many people want to see miracles and signs from God. Let's make one thing clear: Miracles sometimes were given to authenticate the messenger and the message. Just because we don't see miracles and signs that people would like to see in a ministry, it doesn't mean that the ministry is not from the Lord. In my opinion, the biggest miracle is a sinner coming to the Lord Jesus Christ and become a born-again.

As I have said before many times, miracles do not make unbelievers to believe in God. If that is the case, the people who escaped Egypt with Moses should be the strongest believers in God. Yet, all two million of them with the exception of Joshua and Caleb died in the wilderness because of their unbelief. The second generation who believed in God entered into the Promised Land.

Mark 16:17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

B. PAUL THE PIONEER

Romans 15:20-21 And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, 21 but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand."

These two verses, it probably took a couple of minutes to write, it only takes a minute to read, but it took over ten years of strenuous labor from apostle Paul – including three missionary journeys.

Paul's desire to go where no one had gone before did not stem from selfish pride, rather it came from Paul's intense desire to reach the areas where they'd never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ as soon as possible.

Heaven should not only be a destination for every believer of Jesus Christ, but also it should be a motivation for an individual's holy and righteous living and spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ to others.

Apostle Paul was motivated to take as many people as he could to heaven with him. That was his motivation that blossomed from the obedient heart for Jesus.

Do you have the same spiritual passion to spread the Gospel of Jesus to others? I hope so. You don't have to be a trained and gifted evangelist. You just live a godly life and when the Holy Spirit prompts you to speak, you do it with a heart that you want that person to be saved by the grace of God just like it happened to you. If that person does not come to Christ at that time, it is OK. You did what you were told to do according to the Holy Spirit. After all, it is God who saves people, not you or me.

C. PAUL THE TRAVELER

Romans 15:22-24 For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, 24 whenever I journey to

Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.
My wife and I went up to Flagstaff to officiate the wedding of Tim and Liz Kelly over Friday and Saturday. It was a 550 mile round trip in about 10 hours. For all the trips apostle Paul mentioned in last few verses come to about 3000 miles without a car or any other modern transportation. You know Paul's record about traveling by ship. He had been shipwrecked three times. Whenever he showed up at a harbor to get on a ship, all the ship owners hid themselves.

Apostle Paul was serving a great big God, so he expected great big things from Him for God's glory. The Lord met his expectations and more. Paul wanted to visit Rome and use it as the base camp to visit Spain. This trip didn't come to reality the way he wanted. But he did go to Rome in an all expense paid trip – by the courtesy of Roman Emperor Nero. He did not only get to talk to only the Roman citizens about Jesus, but also the emperor himself even though Nero was a serious wacko.

God isn't looking for people of great faith, but for individuals ready to follow Him. Do you have a spiritual passion to be used by the Lord Jesus to advance the Kingdom of God? I sure hope so.

D. THE QUESTIONS WE MUST ANSWER TO OURSELVES AND GOD

1) Who is Jesus Christ to me? Is He my Savior and Lord?

Have you ever asked the questions apostle Paul ask God yet? Do you know Jesus as your Savior and Lord? If you don't, would you like to get to know Him and receive Him into your heart so that your sins might be forgiven and your guilt is removed? Would you like to have true hope and love that never ends?

2) Do I want to do what God wants me to do with willing obedience in my heart?

If somebody who knows about you very well is asked to comment about your life at your funeral ceremony, would that person say, "He loved only temporal things in this world," or would he say, "He loved his Savior Jesus and he lived for Him"?

Are you seeking to build your kingdom on earth or the kingdom of God? You cannot serve both God and money. Whatever you choose to do shows your true heart – God or yourself.

3) Do I have a spiritual passion to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others who are going to end up in hell without it?

We all have the great commission from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 29:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

I told you about the great missionary David Livingstone at the beginning of this teaching. I am going to finish this teaching with his question: "If a commission by an earthly king is considered a honor, how can a commission by a Heavenly King be considered a sacrifice?"