

The Minor Profits

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Good morning. Great to have you all here. It is a good morning. And we welcome Dennis Boone to our happy band this morning. Thank you for being here, Dennis.

We appreciate your presence. We just want you to know that we are an unofficial group that began meeting in 1965 at the old YMCA patio room.

It used to be across the street from the post office, downtown Springfield. And Paul Ponis was the teacher of this group. And he taught it for several years. And I think for maybe the last 30 years or so, something like that, I've been the teacher.

We've been at different locations, but we've been here at Collier's for at least the last 15, 18 years, something like that. And these people graciously accommodate us for Thursday morning because they don't even open until 8 o'clock ordinarily.

But they generously allow us in and provide us with breakfast at 7 o'clock. They make a generous exception for us. And we do appreciate their accommodating us very much.

[1 : 12] We're not seeing it. They may not let us in anymore. So, we don't want to take a chance, Mark. Oh, come on, guys. You know, some places advertise live entertainment with the meals.

So, we could maybe capitalize on that. But anyway, Dennis, we have no official name. We're just Thursday morning guys that love the Lord and get together to study the Word.

We have no membership per se. We have no dues. We have no organization. We have no officers. And there are about a half a dozen different churches here represented.

And we just study the Word and appreciate the fellowship. So, thank you for joining with us this morning. And by the way, you guys, be reminded, and I'm sure you know this, but you need to be reminded from time to time, feel free to invite others into our group.

And I know that there are a whole lot of men who, if they knew what was here and what was available, they'd be happy to join us. But many of them don't know about it. So, if you can pass the Word and give out invitations, why, that would be great.

[2 : 24] They would receive a warm welcome, I'm sure. And you want to keep that in mind, especially the beginning of the year and the beginning of a new study, too, because we are looking at Zechariah.

And this is our next to the last minor prophet we'll be considering. The only one that remains is, well, no, two actually, Haggai. We'll be looking at Haggai and Malachi. But we are now in Zechariah. And we have undertaken the minor prophets because that was the consensus of the group, which you wanted to study. So, we will continue with that vein. But we want to open with a word of prayer. Anything particular that somebody would like to mention? What, Dan? I have good news. Okay. Dr. Burlett, who reattached my cellist tendons, said, boy, they're like steel.

I went in yesterday. He cleared me. Great. Okay. I have something to be thankful for. Wonderful. Wonderful. Yes, Roger.

[3 : 26] Monday was the fourth anniversary of my new heart. Are you kidding? Four years? Wow. Okay. If somebody would have asked me, I would have said two.

So, it's been four years ago. Four years? Four years ago that Roger received a new heart. And this was from somebody in Texas, was it? Wisconsin. Wisconsin.

Baraboo, Wisconsin. Oh, Barabee, Wisconsin. Circus town. Okay. Well. That's why you're such a clown. And you are doing wonderfully well with your new heart.

It didn't do anything for your look. So, he's still, you know. So, what else? You know, nothing you can do about that. Well, let's pray together, shall we?

Father, we have great cause for rejoicing simply because we are in Christ and we need no other reason than that. We thank you for the reality that those who come to you, you will not cast out.

[4 : 26] And you provide us with the very righteousness of Christ, which is so far above and beyond anything we can imagine. But we are grateful for it. Thank you for the truths that are set before us.

Thank you for the preciousness of your word. And for those who are here to gather together to focus upon it. Thank you for the meal we'll be enjoying shortly. For the camaraderie that we enjoy in Christ.

And for what you do in our lives and hearts makes all the difference in this world and in the next. We thank you for it in his wonderful name. Amen. We are examining the prophecies of Zechariah. Zechariah, and we were looking at the first six verses, which is kind of an introduction. And we want to remind you that Zechariah is playing, I guess we could say, he is playing a fiddle that just has one string on it.

And it is that of repentance. And thanks to the Q&A; session that surfaced last week, and it was Joe Moore that brought up the issue about repentance, that is going to require a little further examination because there is so much misunderstanding out there as to what constitutes repentance, what it is all about.

[5 : 51] And much of this confusion comes from the concept that there is a similarity between repentance and penance.

There is a weak kind of connection, but they are not the same at all. And we will explain the difference and look at the Old Testament and the New Testament because repentance is a really, really key word.

And we pointed out before that no one can come to faith in Christ without repenting. Yet, at the same time, we are eager to admit that when we preach the gospel to people, we do not tell them, you have to repent.

And the reason we don't is because you cannot come to faith without repenting, even though it may not even be mentioned, it may not be talked about, it may not even be understood.

But the whole concept of this is, and I'll get to Zechariah in a moment, I just want to use this as an introduction. When someone hears the gospel and begins understanding the concept of the substitutionary death of Christ for their sin, the likelihood is they have already been thinking and believing something else, something different.

[7 : 24] Many people have great confidence and reliance in their own behavior, their own standards, their own morality, their own good deeds, their own good intentions.

And they are thinking and hoping, hoping that that will be good enough and that God will accept them because they've been good enough.

And God will reward them with salvation. And when they hear the gospel and understand that it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he has saved us, the washing and regeneration, renewing of the Holy Spirit.

When they hear this message, they think, uh-oh, that's not what I have always believed. That's not what I am used to thinking. I used to have my confidence in my good behavior, my good intentions, or my church, or whatever.

And now I hear this information that says I must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and trust him for my salvation and his work on the cross and not my work.

[8 : 35] That sets up a conflict in their mind. That creates tension in their mind. That does not compute with what they believed formerly. So in order to come to that position where they received Christ as their Savior, they of necessity have to change their mind.

That is what repentance is. It means a change of the mind. Metanoia in the Greek. It means through the mind. You hear information. You process the information.

You reach a conclusion. And on the basis of the conclusion you reach, you make a decision. And the decision may be, no, no, I reject that.

And many times people do upon the first hearing. They reject the gospel. But then sometimes later they come around after repeated hearing. Joe, what? Okay, now what did Peter mean then by repentance when he was preaching?

Because the gospel that we get of grace that Paul taught was not taught to them. They didn't have that concept. So what repentance was Peter telling the Jews they had to do?

[9 : 43] Okay, I'm just going to take a moment to answer that because I don't want to spend the rest of our session here. But when Peter said on the day of Pentecost, repent and be baptized in

the name of Jesus Christ and you shall receive remission of sins.

What was the singular burning issue at that time? Trust me, guys. It was not the death, burial, resurrection, substitutionary death of Christ.

That comes later. In fact, this is going to be a shocker and you may not believe it. And I understand that because I didn't believe it either when I first heard it. But I invite you to check it out. And that is Peter, Peter did not preach salvation through the finished work of Christ on the day of Pentecost. And fellas, you will not find that concept until you get all the way to Acts 13. And there, the Apostle Paul, on his first missionary journey, lays it out.

And he tells the Jews in the audience of the synagogue where he is preaching, he tells them that repentance and forgiveness and salvation is in the name of this one, speaking of Jesus of Nazareth.

[11:06] And he says, and in him, this is powerful, guys. He says, in him, that is in Christ, you are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

And man, I'm telling you, that hit that Jewish crowd in that synagogue like a thunderclap. They had never heard that before. And that had never been preached before. And I'm satisfied that Paul didn't know it before.

Because on the Damascus Road, when he came to faith, and I don't believe he came to faith on the Damascus Road. I think it was in the house when he sat down and was processing all of this, the three days and three nights he was without food or drink.

That's when he came to faith in Christ. When he saw that vision, fellas, the critical issue from the time Jesus arrived on the scene and was introduced to Israel by John the Baptist, the singular burning issue for the whole nation of Israel was, is this man, Jesus of Nazareth, is he the one spoken of and promised by Moses and the prophets thousands of years ago?

That was the issue. Because if Jesus was the Messiah, then it's just a slam dunk. You owe absolute allegiance to him.

[12:40] If he is not, then he's an imposter. And there are no two ways about it. So when Jesus came on the scene, in order to demonstrate his Messiahship, in order to demonstrate that he was the one spoken of by Moses and the prophets, what did he do to authenticate it?

One miracle after another. And one man at least, and there were several others, but one really specifies it, and that is Nicodemus.

In chapter 3, when John came, when Jesus came to Nicodemus, or Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, he confessed by saying, no, we know that you are come from God because no man can do the miracles that you do unless God is with him.

So Nicodemus was sold on the concept, but Jesus was who he claimed to be. And many of the common people were. Because they were in no position to deny it, they not only listened to his gracious words, and his expressions from the law, and interpreting the law in a way that their teachers never did, because Jesus taught them with authority, and not as the scribes and the Pharisees, and the common people, that consisted of the thousands, that gathered to hear him, like the feeding of the 5,000.

They were persuaded. They were convinced Jesus was the Messiah. But it was the leadership, it was the ruling establishment, the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, etc.

[14:24] They were the ones who rejected him because they saw him as a threat to their position. And Joe pointed out in our study last week, how that they reasoned that we have to do something about Jesus of Nazareth, because if we don't, everybody's going to believe on him.

God forbid. Everybody's going to believe. And the people, the people will be in a position to riot in his name, and overthrow the government of Rome, or create a conflict.

And if Rome relished anything, it was the Pax Romana, the peace of Rome, keeping the peace.

And in order to keep the peace, whenever a riot or insurrection broke out, Rome would come down on it with all six feet.

And the price that would be paid would be brutal. And that was for the intention of communicating to anyone else who thought about rebelling against Rome, you'd better forget it.

You'd better just knuckle under and submit to the authority of Rome. And these chief priests and scribes who were actually in cahoots with the Roman authorities, because you've got to remember, Rome was occupying Israel.

[15 : 58] Rome was the leading government control. Rome called the shots. And the Jews had no liberties except what Rome was willing to grant them. And they had already taken from them the authority to put anyone to death.

The Jews did not have the ability to exercise capital punishment. That's why they sent Jesus, brought Jesus to Pontius Pilate, was to do their dirty work for him, because they couldn't execute him.

And they wanted to be rid of him. So all of these things come into play. But the thing I want to emphasize, and this is so powerful that you understand this, the issue on the day of Pentecost, was not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

That was not the issue. The issue was, you repent. And by repenting, Peter meant, you have to change your mind from your position, previously held, that Jesus was not the Messiah.

And you have to be persuaded in your mind and heart that he was the Messiah. And as you read the text, fellas, it becomes very clear. Peter is not delivering a message of salvation.

[17 : 13] He is delivering a message of indictment and condemnation. And he says to these Jews who were gathered there at the day of Pentecost on this feast day, you, you have by wicked and cruel hands crucified and slain the Lord of glory.

He was delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. And you slew him with wicked hands. But, God raised him from the dead.

And what Peter was calling on them to believe was, they were wrong. They had Jesus all wrong. He was the Messiah. And there were at least 3,000 who changed their minds.

They reversed themselves from rejecting him as the Messiah to believing him as the Messiah. And then Peter said, and if you have repented, if you have changed your mind, here is your opportunity to demonstrate that you submit to the water baptism of John that you earlier rejected.

Remember, it was the chief priests and scribes who rejected the counsel of God against themselves not being baptized by John.

[18 : 38] Why did they not submit themselves to John's baptism? They didn't believe John's message. John's message was Jesus, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

And they did not accept him as such. They did not believe in him as such. And as a result, they provided confrontation and opposition to the entire ministry of Jesus for the three years that he functioned among the public.

They were the ones who were always trying to trap him, who were always trying to present trick questions. They were the ones who were conniving and scheming. And they were the ones who entered into the conspiracy with Judas Iscariot to be able to arrest Jesus in the middle of the night away from the public and the crowds of people so they wouldn't have time to rebel or cause a commotion.

They took him in the middle of the night and brought him to Caiaphas and the trial was on and the whole thing was over and done with in a matter of hours. All of this relates to the one issue, whether or not Jesus of Nazareth was the one spoken of by Moses and the prophets.

And those who believed he was were on board. Those who didn't stayed on the outside. But some of them, at least 3,000, reversed themselves and came online in Acts chapter 3.

[20 : 04] And then, fellas, and here's the distinction. That was the issue. Whether or not Jesus was the Messiah. But you will not find, and if you can find it, more power to you, clue me in because I couldn't find it.

You could not find where eternal life and salvation is provided through the finished work of Christ, believing in his death, burial, and resurrection, that message was not uttered until Acts 13.

And, fellas, this, listen, this is 17 years after the resurrection. Think of that.

Think of that. Paul never began his first missionary journey. Leaving from Antioch in Syria, he and Barnabas never began that first missionary journey until Saul of Tarsus had been saved for about 17 years.

That's remarkable. Now, true, if you read in his conversion account in Acts chapter 9, it's a glorious thing because right after, right after Saul's conversion, you know, he spends those three days and three nights without eating, without drinking, rehashing what he'd seen, asking himself whether this vision he saw in Jesus, whether it was real, was he dreaming, was it real, did it actually happen?

[21 : 37] And this is the man who held the coats of those who stoned Stephen, remember? He was all on their side. And now he's got this tremendous experience on the road of Damascus that is

going to change his life forever.

And it's going to change the world. It's going to change the world because Paul the Apostle will turn out to be the second most important man who ever lived because he's going to be the proclaimer of the first most important man who ever lived.

And eventually, Paul the Apostle will get to Europe. where many of our ancestors came from. Did they not?

And when the gospel reached Europe, it just spread all over and the rest is history. And we, many descendants and generations later, are beneficiaries.

I suspect it, maybe not all of us, but I'll bet almost all of us have our origin somewhere in the continent of Europe with our ancestors. And that's where they were exposed to the gospel.

[22 : 49] And we can be grateful because Paul and Barnabas were headed up north. They were going into Asia Minor and the Spirit of God forbade them and then they saw the Macedonian vision where the man says, come over into Macedonia and help us.

That's Greece. And they crossed the Hellespont, Peloponnesus, that little stretch of water there and into Europe and landed there at Philippi and the Philippian jailer and all the rest of it is history.

So, the issue was whether or not Jesus was the Messiah. Today, that's not the issue for us. We are not asking people or telling people the gospel isn't believe that Jesus was the one spoken of by Moses and the prophets.

What we attach to that message now is the merit of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the fact that he died as a substitute in our place.

He died for our sins. And if you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, he will forgive you, he will pardon you, he will cleanse you, he will make you his child, and you'll be with him for eternity.

[24 : 05] That is salvation, that's eternal life. That's entirely different from what he was preaching originally because he didn't know it. You know, Paul said that he received an abundance of revelations.

And this is overlooked because so much emphasis, guys, is placed upon the parting words of Jesus right before he ascended. And you find that in all of the gospels and you find it repeated in the Acts of the Apostles where Jesus is ascended to heaven right before their eyes.

And right before he left, right before he left the earth, he gave them a commission. We call it, we call it the Great Commission, but that's not what the Bible calls it.

The Bible just calls it a commission. And I've made the point before, any commission that Jesus gave is great just because he gave it. But that commission was that which he dispensed and gave to the Apostles right before he left.

All authority is given unto me. He'd go into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son. That was their commission. And by the way, he gave that to the Jews.

[25 : 19] They were the 12 apostles. Matthias had replaced Judas. They were the 12 apostles. That was their commission. And he tells them, you'll be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

And you know, the really striking thing is, you can come all the way up to Acts chapter 10 and the 12 apostles are still in Jerusalem.

And that is 10 years after Jesus gave the commission. What are they doing still in Jerusalem? Why haven't they gone throughout the whole world?

And the reason is, they were to be successful in Jerusalem. Successful in what? Successful in convincing Jerusalem and Israel that Jesus was their Messiah.

but they never did. They never came to that message. They remained in a mode of rejection, not acceptance.

[26 : 33] And that's where the persecution began. As early as Acts chapter 4, the apostles are being persecuted. Peter will be eventually handed over, crucified, upside down.

James, the brother of John, will be executed and the persecution is on and the persecution is Jews persecuting Jews.

These aren't Romans persecuting Jews. These are Jews persecuting Jews. And Saul of Tarsus was the chief persecutor. Wow. All of this stuff comes together, guys, and makes for a really dramatic understanding of what was taking place back then.

And let me just point this out. Are we ever going to get to Zechariah? It's just, well, I've got to stop.

I've got to stop. Let's get into these first six verses anyway. There's always next week. Yeah. Well, you're right. Well, let me just stop here and entertain any questions or comments that you have.

[27 : 44] What, Dan? You said, you know, Paul was also blinded on the road to Damascus, right? He was, yeah. Okay, so, I think you said you don't think he was converted then and there.

You think they took him, where do they lay him down at? And whose house? That's where he was converted? Is that what you? I think so. The text says that the light was so bright that it blinded Saul of Tarsus.

Now, there's no indication, the text doesn't say anything about it blinding anybody else, but it did Saul of Tarsus. It was this dazzling light.

And in addition, it was Saul who heard the message, Saul, Saul, why persecute thou me? And the men who were with him, and we don't know how many there were, but it's safe to say that it was a party of individuals because you'll recall that Saul, as I mentioned, was the chief persecutor of the Jews who believed in Jesus.

And you've got to understand the perspective of where he's coming from because this new group that was called a sect, S-E-C-T, a sect.

[29 : 06] They were regarded by the intelligentsia and by the leadership in Israel, the scribes, the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees, etc. Those Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah, they were looked upon as a cancer growing on Judaism.

And we have got to stamp this thing out. We've got to nip it in the bud. And remember, fellas, the night that Jesus was betrayed, one of the several things he told his disciples was, fellas, the time is coming when those who would kill you will think they are doing God a service.

And remember later when Paul gives his testimony, he says, God forgave me, I persecuted the church and wasted it, I did it ignorantly and in unbelief.

He did not believe Jesus was the Messiah, and he believed that every Jew who thought he was, was someone who was dangerous, preaching heresy, and it needs to be stamped out.

And he went to the chief priests in the temple and said, I have gotten word that a lot of those who have accepted Jesus as Israel's Messiah, in order to avoid punishment, they fled the country, they left.

[30 : 39] And word has it, they've gone all the way up to Damascus in Syria. And fellas, this is a hundred miles away. And you didn't cover a hundred miles in two hours like we do today.

That was a long journey. And he went to the chief priest in the synagogue, in the temple, and he said, if you will give me a delegation of police, and these were temple police, they were Jews, they were not Romans, Romans aren't involved in this at all, Roman soldiers aren't involved in it.

If you will give me a group of men to go with me from the temple police and give me letters of authorization introducing me to the political government authorities in Syria, because this is a foreign country, Damascus is a foreign country, then I will take these letters of introduction and give them to them, and I'm sure they will be cooperative and allow me to round up those Jews who have fled from Jerusalem and bring them back and persecute them and make them stand trial and prosecute them and so on, put them in jail and all the rest of it.

And they admired him for his enthusiasm and his willingness to do that. This guy, Saul of Tarsus is really gung-ho. He's gung-ho for God. Well, he was gung-ho for the devil and didn't even know it.

And yet, his intentions were right. He thought he was doing the right thing. I did it ignorantly, he said, and in unbelief. And while he was on that road to Damascus, you know the story.

[32 : 12] The light, the voice from heaven, the men who were with him saw the light, but they weren't blinded by it. And they heard a voice.

But the text tells us they couldn't understand what the voice was saying. And the reason they couldn't was because the message was just for Saul.

And Saul was the only one who got it. Why persecutest thou me? And he was absolutely stunned and blinded. And the text says, the text says, they led him by the hand into the city of Damascus.

And they quartered him in a residence on the street called Straight. And it's interesting, I've never seen it, never been there, but I understand that it's a tourist attraction to this day.

You can go to Syria and, well, you might not want to go there today. But there is, there's a street called Straight. It's still there and it's still identified. And he is there at the house of one, what's the name of the guy?

[33 : 21] It was the host, was it Judas? Judas, not to be confused with the other Judas. He's at the house of a man named Judas and he is praying and the Lord communicated to a man named Ananias, not to be confused with Ananias and Sapphira, this is a different Ananias, and he says, I want you to go to the street called Straight and inquire at the house of Judas for a man named Saul, for behold he prays and Ananias says to the Lord, are you sure you got the right guy?

Because we've heard all kinds of things about this Saul of Tarsus, how he's persecuted and the Lord said to Ananias, you go your way and I have already, I'm going to show him what great things he must suffer for my name and Ananias went into the house of Saul, laid his hands on him as he was told, Saul received his sign, and what do you think Saul was doing for those three days and three nights?

In your imagination, and I use my imagination, I see him sitting there at the table like this, with his head in his hands and he's replaying, he's replaying that Damascus scene over and over again and he's asking himself, Saul, was that real?

Did that really happen? Was I imagining it? Was I dreaming? Was it true? Did it really happen? And every time the answer came out the same, it was absolutely true and he couldn't deny it.

And that's when Saul came to the conclusion, I was wrong. Really wrong.

[35 : 01] Saul changed his mind. He repented. And the text goes on to say, and immediately he preached Christ in the synagogue.

Right there in Damascus. And think of it, guys, this was the place where he came expecting to round up these Jews and when he went to the synagogue where these Jews would be in Damascus, he was all prepared to have those who were believers in Jesus pointed out to him and he was going to arrest them and take them back.

And now these people are sitting there in the congregation and they see and hear that Saul of Tarsus is there and they're thinking, uh-oh, we are toast. This guy is here for us. And he stood up and he preached Jesus was the Messiah.

Wow! That is... Tune in next week for the next exciting episode. Okay.