

# CARRYING OUT THE DIVINE COMMISSION TO ANNOUNCE THE NEW TESTAMENT JUBILEE

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The apostle Paul's radical conversion is a landmark event in the history of the early church and a crucial turning point in the Acts of the Apostles: a highly trained Pharisee who fiercely persecuted the church became a persecuted minister of Christ to the Jews and to the Gentiles for the building up of the church. At his conversion Paul experienced a great transfer from the Old Testament dispensation of the law into the New Testament dispensation of grace, and eventually, he worked together with God to transfer His chosen people from the Old Testament economy into the New Testament economy. Given its importance, Paul's conversion has drawn attention from scholars, including theologians, historians, and literary critics, and the three accounts of this event recorded in Acts have come under substantial scholarly scrutiny. Despite the abundance of books and articles on this subject, the majority of Christians today neglect the ultimate purpose of Paul's conversion, which is altogether related to the accomplishment of God's New Testament economy. No other portion in Acts describes the contents of Paul's commission as succinctly as does 26:18, which records the Lord's words: "To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

In light of the divine revelation of the New Testament, Paul's commission in Acts 26:16-18 was to carry out God's New Testament ministry, the ministry of the jubilee, both as a continuation of the incarnated Christ's ministry on earth recorded in the Gospel of Luke and in coordination with the resurrected and ascended Christ's ministry in heaven recorded in the book of Acts. In *The Acts of the Apostles* Arno C. Gaebelin posits that Acts 26:18 is "a terse statement" of the gospel for which Paul was commissioned and that "all the elements of the Gospel are contained in this verse" (406). In brief, the New Testament reveals that the divine commission entrusted unto Paul was to both open people's eyes that they may see God's New Testament economy and to bring them out of Satan's kingdom of darkness into God's kingdom of light so that they might experience God's judicial redemption by receiving forgiveness of sins and might participate in God's salvation in life by enjoying the Triune God as their inheritance in the sphere of the church, the Body of Christ, as the house of God.

The contents of Paul's commission embody his entire life and service as a minister and witness of Christ. Since Paul is a God-appointed pattern (1 Tim. 1:16), his commission should be our commission. In order to appreciate the contents of Paul's divine commission, we need to see the contents of the divine commission concerning the New Testament jubilee seen in the Lord's ministry of the jubilee in the Gospel of Luke and in Paul's ministry of the jubilee in Acts and the Epistles, which ministry is a continuation of the Lord's ministry.