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- [Page 1](#)
  - [Page 2](#)
  - [Page 3](#)
  - [Page 4](#)
  - [Page 5](#)
  - [Page 6](#)
  - [Page 7](#)
  - [Page 8](#)
  - [Page 9](#)

## GOD'S WORD IS SURE

(episode 002)

**theme:** God's word is sure. **scripture:** II Peter 1:17-21 **quote:** "And so we have the prophetic word made more sure...for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." II Peter 1:19a,21. **summary:** Nit Whitly travels to 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jerusalem to interview the Apostle Peter. We find Peter in the Temple boldly proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He has had plenty of first-hand experiences that could convince him of the truth of what he's proclaiming. But his confidence in the message of the cross is not based primarily in his experiences, but rather in the word of God. He tells us that it is more certain and dependable than all the experiences in the world because it was not written by the will of man, but by men led by the Holy Spirit.

## PAUL & SILAS IN PRISON

(episode 008)

**theme:** The cause of Christ is worth the cost **scripture:** Acts 16:16-34 **quote:** "For I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am...I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Philippians 4:11, 13 **summary:** Despite being in a prison cell with chains on their feet, Paul and Silas are singing praises to God. Nit Whitly questions them as to why this is. They tell him that the focus of their lives is to preach the gospel, and no cost is too high in serving Christ. Therefore they rejoice whether they are in prison or living in freedom as long as they are proclaiming God's word.

When, as they are singing songs of praise to God, the prison walls shake and their chains fall off, they take the opportunity, not to run to freedom, but to speak of salvation to their jailor.

For us, every word we speak, every move we make, should have as its end to glorify God.

## SAUL OF TARSUS [part one]

(episode 034)

**theme:** An encounter with Jesus completely changed Saul's life. **scripture:** Acts 9:1-9 **quote:** "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name...?"

Acts 9:21 **summary:** Something strange has happened to Saul of Tarsus that has his friends worried. Saul was a Pharisee, and a very strict one at that. He was traveling to Damascus commissioned to imprison those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah. But a strange occurrence

happened on that road. Saul was struck down from his horse by a bright light. He claims Jesus spoke to him revealing to him that He was indeed the Messiah.

Now Saul is going about preaching the very thing he once believed to be a lie, and defending what he once opposed. Nick Guy, Private Eye, is hired to investigate this situation to discover what has really happened to Saul.

Saul, who would begin calling himself Paul, would go on to be one of the greatest preachers and defenders of the Christian faith. One encounter with Jesus completed changed his life, and that same Jesus is still changing people's lives today.

## **SAUL OF TARSUS [part two]**

(episode 035)

**theme:** When someone comes to Jesus they become a new person. **scripture:** Acts 9:1-9 **quote:** "Therefore is any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." II Corinthians 5:17 **summary:** In part one of this two-part episode we found Saul's friends concerned about the changes he went through following his encounter with Jesus. Nick Guy, Private Eye, along with his companion Mr. DeSoto were hired to get to the bottom of the matter.

What they discovered was that Jesus, through His death on the cross, can set people free from their bondage to sin. This experience can make a drastic change in the way the person acts, thinks and speaks. What he once held as false he now believes to be true. Old bad habits and behaviors begin to fall away. A new purpose motivates them and directs their lives. This sort of change is what happened to Saul, who would begin calling himself Paul, and would become one of the most influential preachers of the gospel in the first century.

Whether the change is drastic, as in Paul's case, or not does not change that fact that when any man is in Christ, he does become new. The old things are passed away and all things become new.

## **PETER & GOD'S FORGIVENESS**

(episode 054)

**theme:** God's heart is to forgive and restore us. **scripture:** Matthew 26:34, 69-75; Hebrews 7:25; I John 1:9 **quote:** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9 **summary:** Nit Whitly travels back to the Temple in Jerusalem to interview the Apostle Peter. The subject of this report is forgiveness. Peter, we may remember, denied knowing Jesus when he was confronted outside the Temple during the trial of Jesus. This denial had been foretold to him by Jesus Himself. Afterward Peter went out and wept bitterly because of his sin.

But God didn't leave Peter in this condition. Peter displayed what the Apostle John would write about in I John 1:9. "If we confess our sins, He [meaning God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Perhaps as a way of reassuring Peter, an angel told the women at the tomb on the day of Jesus' resurrection to "Go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said to you.'" It's interesting to note that Peter was singled out in this statement.

We may not find ourselves in quite the same situation that Peter was in, but we certainly will have occasions every day to deny Jesus. When we do sin, it's encouraging to know that God will not cast us off, but is ready and willing to forgive us if we are truly sorry and are willing to repent, or turn away, from our sin.

He is faithful to forgive us, because even though we are faithless, He remains faithful in His love and care for us. He is just to forgive us, because the price for our sin has been paid. When we sin we need not despair, but turn to Him for forgiveness, strength and hope.

## **PAUL ESCAPES FROM DAMASCUS**

(episode 086)

**theme:** Don't try to silence the truth of God, but embrace it. **scripture:** Acts 9:20-25 **quote:** "For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest

his deeds should be exposed." John 3:20 **summary:** The Apostle Paul boldly proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ wherever he went. His preaching was received gladly by some, but not all. In fact, the religious leaders in Israel were very upset with Paul. They had been teaching that Jesus was not the Messiah. But Paul's teaching confounded them and increased his testimony as he proved to all that Jesus is indeed the Messiah God had promised to redeem His people.

The religious leaders had several choices in what to do. They could admit that what Paul was saying was true, but then their standing with the people as the authorities in Scripture would be damaged, and they didn't want that. They had another option, and that was to kill Paul. They formed a plot to do just that, but their plan failed.

When we are confronted with the truth of God, especially when it reveals sin in our lives, we may be tempted to run from it or even silence it. This is never a wise thing to do. We cannot ultimately run from truth. Given enough time we will be forced to deal with it and usually on harsher terms. The best thing to do is to face God's word and embrace it, even if it reveals something in us that we would rather not face.

It is wiser to allow God to instruct us, train us, and work righteousness in us. His words may hurt or cause us discomfort, but in the end they will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

## **PAUL'S SHIPWRECK**

(episode 103)

**theme:** God never fails to accomplish anything He has said He will do. **scripture:** Acts 27 **quote:** "Keep your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have

been told." Acts 27:25 **summary:** The Apostle Paul found himself on a boat in the midst of a terrible storm. In order to lighten the boat, the captain of the ship ordered the cargo thrown into the sea. When still in danger, they threw the tackle over as well. After three days there seemed little hope of being saved and all on board were preparing to perish at sea. All except Paul. He wasn't frightened at all.

Seeing this situation, Paul spoke up. He told those with him to keep their courage up. He told them that even though the ship would be lost, not one of them would die. How could he be this confident. He said, "This very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, stood before me; saying 'Do not be afraid, Paul, you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'"

God's word was good enough for Paul. He trusted that God was not only willing but powerful enough to do exactly as He said He would. God has said, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand." (Isaiah 14:24).

We may not have as promises from God as specific as those He made to Paul, but He has told us that if we trust in His Son that we will have eternal life. And that's a promise we can put our confidence and hope in.

## **A NEW SAUL**

(episode 104)

**theme:** When someone comes to Jesus they become a new person. **scripture:** Acts 9 **quote:** "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed

away; behold all things become new." II Corinthians 5:17 **summary:** Saul was a dedicated man. He was a Pharisee and held to the teachings and practices very strictly. It should be no surprise

then that he would be at the forefront of persecuting the new sect that was following the teachings of Jesus and claiming Him to be the Messiah.

While Saul was on his way to Damascus, armed with the authority to arrest and imprison those who followed Jesus, he was knocked off his horse by a great light. Falling to the ground he heard the voice of Jesus asking him, "Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?" When Saul asked who was speaking to him, Jesus told him it was He, Jesus.

From then on Saul, who would begin to call himself Paul, was a different person. The man who once taught against the belief that Jesus is the Messiah now spoke boldly in His defense. The man who once went to great pains to silence the gospel became one of its loudest spokesman. The man who once imprisoned Christians would now find himself in prison for serving Jesus. The man who once consented in the death of Stephen would now lay his own life down for the very same belief that Stephen did.

The Apostle Paul serves as a great example to us of the power of God to change a life. His story is well-documented, but it is not the only one to display the truth of II Corinthians 5:17. Perhaps you know of someone who's life was dramatically turned around by the saving blood of Jesus. Perhaps that someone is you!

## **BARNABAS & ENCOURAGEMENT**

(episode 105)

**theme:** Look for ways to encourage others and build them up. **scripture:** Acts 4:36 **quote:** "Barnabas told hold of him and brought him to the apostles." Acts 9:27a **summary:** There was a man in the early church named Joseph. The apostles called him Barnabas, which means "Son of Encouragement." From this, and from what we read about him in Scripture, Barnabas was a man known for encouraging others and looking for ways to build them up.

He also sought ways to reconcile people to one another. It was Barnabas who stood by the apostle Paul after his conversion. He had come to Jerusalem and was trying to associate with the disciples, but they were afraid of him because of his history as a persecutor of the church. Barnabas brought him and introduced him to the apostles in Jerusalem, giving a defense for what Paul had done since he had become a Christian.

Let's try to be sons and daughters of encouragement. Everyone appreciates encouragement, especially when things aren't going too well for them. Let's look for opportunities to be a support for someone who needs it and look for ways to build others up wherever and whenever we can.

## **PETER'S DENIAL**

(episode 121)

**theme:** We all, like the Apostle Peter, have denied Jesus at one time or another; and we all, like the Apostle Peter, can find forgiveness as well. **scripture:** Mark 14:66-72; 16:7 **quote:** "But go, tell His disciples, and Peter, 'He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said t you.'" Mark 16:7 **summary:** One of the things the Apostle Peter is best known for is his denial of Jesus. On the night Jesus was put on trial, Peter was recognized as having been with Him. Three times Peter denied knowing Jesus. Just then, a rooster crowed, and Peter was reminded of something Jesus had told him. Before the rooster crowed Peter would deny knowing Jesus three times. Peter went out and wept bitterly.

We all, just like Peter, have denied knowing Jesus. We may not do this directly like Peter did, but sometimes our words or actions will display to others a denial of Jesus' authority in our lives. Sometimes this denial happens within our own hearts.

Fortunately for Peter, and us, the story doesn't end there. Peter was repentant for his sin. It is interesting to note that after Jesus' resurrection, an angel told the women who had come to the tomb to give word to the disciples that Jesus would go before them into Galilee and meet them there. The

angel, in giving these instructions, singled out Peter. Perhaps this was a way of encouraging Peter that he was forgiven.

If we find ourselves denying Jesus, let's take Peter's example. Let's repent of our sin and we can be assured that God will forgive us. As it says in I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

## JOHN THE BAPTIST

(episode 127)

**theme:** In our lives, God must be ever increasing and our sinful ways decrease. **scripture:** Matthew 3:1-17 **quote:** "He must increase, but I must decrease." John 3:30 **summary:** In this episode of Reality Check, Nit Whitley interviews John the Baptist. One of the most interesting things about John the Baptist is his attitude towards his ministry and the ministry of Jesus.

John the Baptist had an important ministry. He paved the way for the coming of the Messiah. He called people to repentance and many, through his preaching, came to him to be baptized.

But when Jesus came on the scene, John's ministry began to fade. John's disciples came to him and told him that Jesus was baptizing, "And all are coming to Him." John pointed out that a man can receive nothing, unless it has been given to him from heaven. He had repeatedly told everyone that he was not the Christ, but had been sent before Him. It was proper and necessary that Jesus should increase, and he, and his ministry, should decrease.

That same attitude should be in us. When we come to the Lord, we should continue to grow in Him. Our plans and purposes should begin to decrease as we desire to fulfill His plans and purposes for our lives. Our ideas of right and wrong should be abandoned for His.

Just like John the Baptist, God must increase and we must decrease.

## THE LAW WRITTEN ON OUR HEARTS

(episode 147)

**theme:** All men know instinctively what God has declared to be right and wrong. **scripture:** Romans 1:20; Romans 2:14,15 **quote:** "They show the work of the Law written on their hearts." Romans 2:15a **summary:** Romans 1:20 tells us that God's eternal power and divine nature (that He's God) is known to all men instinctively. They know that God exists and that they have a responsibility to worship Him. Not everyone responds correctly to that instinctive knowledge, but God says we are all without excuse.

Romans 2:14,15 goes on to tell us that even without the written word of God, men have a similar instinctive knowledge of what God declares to be right and wrong.

Certain things, like stealing and murder, are considered bad by all civilizations, regardless of whether they've ever had the gospel preached to them or not. Cowardice and lying are always considered bad traits no matter where you go in time and history. Men, even those who deny the existence of God, agree with this. That's because God has put this into their hearts, it is common knowledge provided by Him in their hearts.

This shows the work of the law written on our hearts, our consciences testifying and our thoughts either accusing us or defending us. Of course we find that, in so many ways, we are accused of having fallen short of this standard. That falling short is also common to all men. It is called sin, and all have sinned. All sin leads to death, meaning all men are destined for eternal separation from God.

But, as there is a universal understanding of the law of God, there is also a universal means of removing from us the penalty for sin, and that means is through one man, Jesus Christ. The means is His death on the cross, by which He took upon Himself the penalty do to all of us for our sin. This gift of the cross is available to all men, to all those who call upon Jesus as their Lord and Savior.