

*I now send you, to open their eyes...that they may receive forgiveness of sins...* [ACTS 26:17-18](#)

This verse is the greatest example of the true essence of the message of a disciple of Jesus Christ in all of the New Testament.

God's first sovereign work of grace is summed up in the words, "...that they may receive forgiveness of sins..." When a person fails in his personal Christian life, it is usually because he has never *received* anything. The only sign that a person is saved is that he has received something from Jesus Christ. Our job as workers for God is to open people's eyes so that they may turn themselves from darkness to light. But that is not salvation; it is conversion— only the effort of an awakened human being. I do not think it is too broad a statement to say that the majority of so-called Christians are like this. Their eyes are open, but they have received nothing. Conversion is not regeneration. This is a neglected fact in our preaching today. When a person is born again, he knows that it is because he has received something as a gift from Almighty God and not because of his own decision. People may make vows and promises, and may be determined to follow through, but none of this is salvation. Salvation means that we are brought to the place where we are able to receive something from God on the authority of Jesus Christ, namely, forgiveness of sins.

This is followed by God's second mighty work of grace: "...an inheritance among those who are sanctified..." In sanctification, the one who has been born again deliberately gives up his right to himself to Jesus Christ, and identifies himself entirely with God's ministry to others.