

Softball Devotion #5

- Introduction to today's devotion

- Review: what is sin, and what is salvation?
- Sin:
 - Falling short of God's glory
 - "Missing the mark" – completely
 - Disobedience to God, who created us to live completely righteous lives, in a relationship with Him
 - Every one of us are sinners
- Salvation:
 - We cannot save ourselves
 - God loved us immensely and demonstrated this by sending His own Son to die on the cross for our sins
 - Jesus Christ is our Saviour – the only One who can reconcile us to God by taking the punishment and judgment of sin upon Himself
 - This was what the cross is all about

- An example of a sinner – Apostle Paul

- Saul (who later became Paul) was a Pharisee – one of the most highly educated Jewish scholars during the time of Jesus
- He hated Christians with a passion, and sought to persecute and kill Christians wherever he went (**Acts 8:1 - And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.**)
- Clearly, he was living in sin; his ambition in life was to seek out people and kill them for what they believed!
- He prided himself in his acts of aggression – and he was openly selfish for establishing a name for himself as a persecutor of Christians
- Saul was undoubtedly an ambitious character, and took pride in the work of his own hands – he never wanted to lose out on his pursuit of Christians
- In Acts 9, he encounters Jesus Christ as he's traveling on a road... (**describe Acts 9 in more detail**)
- At that encounter, he recognizes Jesus for who He really is, the truth of all that He had said, and all that He had done – especially what Jesus did on the cross for sinners like him and like us
- After this, his life turned 180 degrees – he had come to know the Saviour, and was renewed with joy! Those Jews who once followed him became his persecutors, which resulted in him being imprisoned.
- Even as he was imprisoned, he couldn't help but to share the good news of Jesus with his captors and they recognized their sin and their need for a Saviour, and became Christians!
- Clearly his life was changed... this was an act of grace – something that Saul (who was later named Paul) did not deserve

- **Another example of a sinner – Ken Wu**

- Most of us probably can't relate to the way that Saul lived before knowing Jesus... most of us probably haven't killed anyone or sought after people to persecute and slay them
- But all of us have had the motivations in our hearts to do very similar things that Saul did... he was driven by anger and rage, so have we been angered and filled with rage at someone. He was driven by selfishness and pride in what he was doing, so have we been selfish and proud in our minds over our accomplishments...
- You know, as we've been talking about throughout this season, sin isn't something that's just external – it's primarily about the state of our heart
- Jesus said that if we even hated a brother in our hearts, we've murdered them (**Matthew 5:21-26**)
- If we've puffed up our chest in pride or hoarded things for ourselves in selfishness, we've sinned against God – even if others don't necessarily see it
- I'd like to briefly tell you the story of another sinner – that's me, Ken Wu.
- I did not grow up in a Christian family; instead I spent about the first nine years of my life in total ignorance of God, and of the person of Jesus Christ.
- I lived for myself, and always made sure to take care of my own needs. I was quite selfish, and unwilling to treat others generously or kindly.
- Thankfully my parents helped teach me what sharing was all about. Even still, though I may have outwardly changed some of my ways, inwardly I was still very much a selfish person.
- Much like Saul, I was also a very proud person. I wanted to be the winner in everything I did, so much so that when I was losing at something I would cheat or find some other way to be victorious.
- Again, my parents were there to guide and correct me, but in the end whenever I lost, that feeling of bitterness would always make me terribly upset. My parents were great, and they knew how to raise me, but the underlying face still remained: I was separated from God – I had no joy nor did I know true happiness.

- **The transformation of Ken**

- When I was in grade four, my aunt and uncle, who were Christians, got in touch with my family. At the time my parents had no interest in religion, but my aunt would not give up trying to convince my mother that church was more than just a religion
- In the end, my mother decided it was an okay idea to try out going to church since there could be other people we would meet there
- My first experience of church was rather pleasant since I was in a class with other students who were around my age. We got along well, and it was a fun environment, but I knew I was still 'different' than others at the church, because my beliefs were still in myself, not in this "God" that they were talking about. Quite honestly, it was the people that attracted me to church, not God himself
- When I was in grade 7, my Sunday school teacher seriously questioned what I believed and helped me to understand what the gospel was really all about. That year, I accepted Jesus into my life as my personal Saviour, and also my Lord – the One whom I would follow from then on. I recognized that I was a sinner just like Saul, and that Jesus had died for my sins. This was indeed the gospel, which means "good news"! Because of what He did, my relationship with God was now restored, and eternal life was His promise to me!

- I got into the habit of attending church with my peers and learning the bible through my teachers. The first and most important commitment was already completed and my life began to change. Jesus was changing my life day by day and I felt joy whenever I was able to share this good news with others. No longer was everything about ‘winning’.
- As I grew older, however, I began to understand that regular attendance to church on Sundays or fellowship was not what God primarily required of us. God commands that we give him our all.
- Mark 12:30 tells us, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” You see, God demands everything from us, not just regular attendance at some physical building.
- And this is the challenge I’m issuing to you today, whether you are a Christian or not. The good news of Jesus Christ demands a response. Are you going to accept this gift of being saved from sin, and commit your life to following your Saviour, or are you going to reject it?
- Just like Saul, my life has been radically transformed by the power of the marvellous good news of Jesus Christ. Will you allow God to radically transform your life?