

“Paul Gives His Testimony”
Acts 22:1-21
(Preached at Trinity, March 5, 2008)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we saw last time, the nature of Paul's ministry was undergoing a major change. From this point on Paul is laboring as a prisoner.
2. This, however, did not end Paul's life of ministry. He now saw himself as an “ambassador in bonds.”
 - A. Paul saw this as just another opportunity to serve Christ.
 1. Paul wrote four books of the Bible from his imprisonment at Rome – Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.
 2. Paul also saw it as yet another opportunity to spread the Gospel of Christ. He had the opportunity to preach to Roman officials and possibly even the emperor himself.
 - B. We must see our life in this way? If your life belongs to Christ and you have committed yourself to serving Him then you should be willing to serve Him in every condition?
3. Having been arrested by the Romans Paul was placed in chains and led away to the Roman barracks where he would have been interrogated. When they got to the stairs Paul spoke to the commander who was surprised that Paul could speak Greek.
 - A. The Roman commander presumed that Paul was the Egyptian who had led a revolt of four thousand men. Josephus tells of this group of Jewish nationalists who were determined to overthrow the yoke of Rome.
 - B. Paul states that he was a man from Tarsus and asked permission to speak to the crowd. Paul stood on the stairs and when he spoke in Hebrew a silence fell over the crowd.
4. **Chapter 22** records Paul's defense. Paul begins in **Verses 1-5** with his legal defense.
 - A. Paul had been condemned on several accusations – **Acts 21:28**
 1. That he had taught against the Jews, against the law, and against the Temple
 2. That he had defiled the temple by bringing in a Gentile
 - B. Paul first defends himself against these accusations:
 1. **Verses 2-3** – Far from being anti-Jewish, Paul states that he *is* a Jew. He spoke in Hebrew and stated clearly that he was a Jew.
 2. He stated his devotion to Jerusalem – he was raised in the city.
 3. He stated his theological credentials
 - a. He was from Tarsus
Acts 21:39 – “But Paul said, I am a man *which am* a Jew of Tarsus, a *city* in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city. . .”
Tarsus was a university city and crossroad of travel

- b. More important, he was trained under Gamaliel, the most honored rabbi of the first century.
 - 4. As far as the accusation that Paul opposed the law Paul states that he was trained up strictly according to the law of the fathers.
 - 5. Finally, he states that he was zealous for God.
He described in **Verses 4-5** how his zeal caused him to blindly persecute those of “The Way” – Christians.
 - 5. This was the beginning of his message confronting his listeners. Paul was defending himself but his chief goal was to confront them with the Gospel.
- I. Paul first confronts them with the worthlessness of zeal without Christ
Paul had been very zealous in Judaism
- A. Paul knew his Jewish audience was also were filled with zeal
Acts 22:3 – “and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.”
 - 1. They demonstrated their zeal openly
Acts 22:23 – “And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air,”
 - 2. They had the best of motives
 - 3. Paul will show that their zeal was a misplaced zeal
 - B. Misplaced zeal is a sinful zeal
 - 1. There are many religions who show great zeal
They believe they are doing the work of God – it is a misplaced zeal
 - 2. Some of the great atrocities of history have been on misplaced zeal
 - 3. Zeal without knowledge will lead to terrible consequences
Hosea 4:6 – “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”
 - 4. Paul would later confess the sin of his misplaced zeal
1 Timothy 1:12-13 – “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; ¹³ Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.”
 - 5. Zeal without Christ has no value
1 Corinthians 13:3 – “And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”
 - 6. Many people are sadly substituting zeal for a relationship with Christ
We can already hear the echo of their voices on the day of judgment
Matthew 7:22-23 – “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”
 - C. Beginning in **Verse 6** Paul begins to describe his conversion. As he describes his salvation experience he both presents the Gospel and confronts their own guilt.

- II. First, Paul describes the supernatural aspect of his conversion.
- A. This is not a work of man
1. We go forth completely dependent upon God. You don't argue a man into the kingdom.
 2. This doesn't mean we don't preach with passion and persuasion. But it isn't by our enticing words that a man is saved.
- B. Paul describes it as seeing the glory of Christ
Acts 22:6 – “suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me”
1. Paul's salvation was extraordinary – He saw a direct revelation from Christ – this is not normative.
 2. Although we don't see Christ with our eyes it still demands that the Holy Spirit reveal Christ unto us. We are enabled to see the beauty and excellence of Christ.
- C. Paul was smitten by Christ
Acts 22:7 – “And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”
1. Christian conversion crushes our rebellion. It casts us to the ground and kills the old man.
Romans 6:6 – "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."
 2. All former hopes for eternity are crushed – We are brought to the end of ourselves - bankrupt
- D. Paul's conversion was spectacular
1. His testimony continued to be a great part of his Gospel ministry
 2. The truth is that every conversion is spectacular – every one supernatural
2 Corinthians 4:6 – "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."
 3. We may not see shining light but to transform a sinner from death to life, from wickedness to righteousness is a true miracle. It is a resurrection from the dead.
 4. This is beyond the ability of man.
 5. Paul would later describe his conversion as all of God
Galatians 1:11-16 – "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³ For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: ¹⁴ And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace, ¹⁶ To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:"

- E. Notice Paul's conversion was totally beyond the ability of the bystanders to comprehend.
Acts 22:9 – "And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me."
Acts 9:7 – "And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man."
 1. They saw the light but the voice was mere noise
 2. The Gospel is mere noise until the Spirit of God gives us understanding
 Again this points to the miraculous nature of salvation.
- III. Second, Paul describes his conviction of sin – this is essential to Christian conversion. Christ condemned Paul in his sin. A Gospel void of the issue of sin is no Gospel.
Acts 22:7 – "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"
- A. Christ condemned Paul for his rebellious life
 1. He had spent his life in opposition to Christ.
 2. He admitted in **Verse 4** that he had actively persecuted those who followed Christ – but in truth his sins were against Christ.
 3. In the other two accounts of Paul's conversion Paul gives another statement
Acts 9:5 – "And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*"
Acts 26:14 – "And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*"
 4. In other words, Paul was kicking against the pricks of his conscience.
- B. Sin is an essential element of the Gospel
 1. The Gospel is about God's method of dealing with our sin
 2. Jesus came to die for sinners. He suffered under the wrath of God to deliver them from their sin.
 3. The Gospel demands that sinners come to a knowledge of their sin and flee to Christ
- C. Conviction of sin is an essential element of Christian conversion
 1. We saw this in **Chapter 2**
Acts 2:37 – "Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart,"
 2. Conviction brings a sense of our guilt and righteous condemnation under the wrath and judgment of Jesus Christ
 3. If the Jews had been convicted of their sin they might have turned to Christ

- IV. Third, Paul describes the result of his conversion – absolute submission
- A. Paul immediately placed his life in the hands of Christ
Acts 22:8 – “And I answered, Who art thou, Lord?”
Acts 22:10 – “And I said, What shall I do, Lord?”
1. He was immediately transformed from a hater of Christ to a servant of Christ
 2. It is a terrible lie to teach that you can have salvation without Jesus being your Master and Lord
- B. True conversion results in a transformation
1. It is a dying to self – “And I said, What shall I do, Lord?”
Acts 9:6 – “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”
 2. Paul immediately came under the authority of Christ
Acts 22:10 – “And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.”
Acts 22:15 – “For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.”
 3. Jesus stated the standard in the Gospel of Matthew
Matthew 16:24 – “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

Conclusion:

1. When Paul was he was confronted by the living God he submitted. He was submitting to God now.
2. The Jews condemned themselves. When Paul was confronted with the truth of Christ he immediately laid down his weapons of assault upon Christ and surrendered. When these Jews heard they persecuted all the more.
3. After Paul’s conversion he went to Jerusalem prepared to bring the Gospel to the Jews just as he was doing before them now. But Jesus knew their hard hearts and sent Paul to the Gentiles. Their reaction in **Verse 22** merely confirmed our Lord’s words,
Acts 22:18 – “they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.”
4. So many in our generation likewise will not hear. This must not prevent us from testifying before them. Paul was sent to the Gentiles. We have been sent to all men.