

Acts 22:1-30

“Paul’s Dramatic Defense”

We pick back up with Paul where we left him last week in that rather precarious position, poised before the people on the steps of the Antonio fortress overlooking the temple courts ready to give his defense. You no doubt recall what led him to this point, having come to Jerusalem to give the church there a love offering from the churches of the Gentiles that Paul had planted and ministered in, when he got there he told James and all the elders what God had been doing in his life, they praised the Lord and said, “Listen Paul here’s the deal. There are scores of Jews here in the city that have come to believe on the Lord Jesus but they still have a love and a passion for the customs of the law and the heritage of our culture. But they’ve been told that you tell the Jews wherever *you go* to forsake Moses; that you tell them not to circumcise their children, nor to walk according to the customs. So here’s what you need to do (because they’re going to hear that you’re here) take these 4 guys, sponsor this their last week of purification/consecration, join with them in the vow, and when they all see what you’re doing they’re going to know that you’re a good Jewish boy and that what they’ve been told about you is nonsense.”

James urged Paul to make peace in this way, and so Paul in his reasoning, understanding that customs or traditions do nothing to *add to or take away from* his righteous standing in Christ said, “Fine.” Paul then took them, went into the temple *with them* and announced the expiration of their days of purification so that a sacrifice of consecration, perhaps a peace offering, or whatever could be prepared for them. Well while they were there someone recognized him, began to shout out presumption concerning him, and the very thing James was trying to avoid in having him there is exactly what took place, they began to beat him and bludgeon him, and ultimately they were trying to kill him. and Suddenly it would seem that all those scores of Christians in the city were no where to be found when Paul needed them, but be that as it may, the soldiers stationed in the fortress on the northwest corner of the temple area rushed down the stairs (at least a couple hundred of them) immediately apprehended him, and began to take him up the stairs.

Paul looked at the commander and said, “May I speak to you?” and The commander was astounded at the intellectual educated style of Greek that Paul was speaking to him, and he said, “Aren’t you that Egyptian guy that led a rebellion out in the wilderness?” Paul said, “No, I’m a Jew from the city of Tarsus, no insignificant city, and I implore you that you would let me speak to these people.” So the commander said, “Fine” and so motioning with his hand Paul began to silence the multitude who was moments ago seeking to kill him, and when a hush fell over the crowd he began to speak to them in the Hebrew with Aramaic language.

Though Paul would've never suspected that this is the way that he'd have ascertained his platform, in a roundabout way he was pumped to be there, because this was a moment that he'd been waiting for all his Christian life, a moment he felt particularly prepared *for*, that he was passionate *about*. Why? Because he knew the inner workings of these people, he knew how they thought, their perspectives on the issues of life/law and tradition, what it was that made them tick. and He thought, "If there's anyone qualified to effectively share with them and show them where they're at verses where they need to be, it's me."

He was right, but there was one problem, God had not called him to minister to the Jews but rather to the Gentiles, and so as qualified as he was in the natural, that has nothing to do with the supernatural working of God in your life. and I can identify with him on a certain level with respect to his thinking that he should be the man to reach these people.

As you know I was saved out of the secular scene of hard and heavy, metal type music, and when I came to Christ, man I had a passion for the music community, still do in many ways. I didn't know Paul's story at that point, but I thought, "Lord, just turn me loose back stage with these guys, or onstage in front of the crowd and I'll lead them to You in droves." Because I knew them, knew where they were coming from, their perspective on life, what they thought (generally speaking) about God/Jesus, what it was that made them tick. and So I considered myself uniquely qualified to minister to a certain community of people. The problem was that God didn't call me to minister to them (specifically), and it took me a while to figure that out, I pressed for position, we played in various dark holes and dens of debauchery never seeing any of them come to Christ. and with me I finally had to conclude that it was time to cast my nets on the other side of the boat, and God began to use my life in ways that were bearing fruit. and I think that often times God purposely *doesn't* use us in areas we feel most qualified in the natural because then we have the tendency to take the credit. As to where if I know I have no business doing what I'm doing, (credentially speaking) and yet a radical work is being done, than it must be the Lord. and Where I'm weak, than I'm strong for *God's* strength is perfected in my weakness. You see then God gets all the glory, and he who glories let him glory *in the Lord*.

Ch 22 breaks down into 3 basic sections as far as an outline is concerned as Paul shares with us a little bit about his history as he makes his defense here before the people, if you take notes you might jot down #1 Vs 1-5 Paul's Conduct Prior to Christ #2 Vs 6-16 Paul's Conversion Through Christ, #3 Vs 17-30 (We'll call though there's a few other things in there) Paul's Commission By Christ,

Vs1-5

What's he doing here? He's painting for them a patriotic portrait of who he is so that they might know that he is for them and not against them, that he is a Jew, born in Tarsus, but raised in *this city*, that Jerusalem, disciplined by one of the most highly respected Jewish Rabbis of all time Gamaliel, and that he was zealous toward God as they were that day. (Now he's still zealous toward God, just not as they were, they had a zeal that wasn't according to knowledge, and we'll talk about that more in just a second).

But one of the things I want you to see here is that Paul is simply sharing his testimony with these people, he's *witnessing* to them regarding the work of Christ in his life. You remember when Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit and He said, "*...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" Acts 1:8 and What I want you to see is that being a witness is as simple as sharing the reality of what Christ has done in your life. There in vs 1 where Paul says, "Hear my defense" that word "defense" is the Greek word "Apolgia" from where we get our word "apologetics." and We call these guys "defenders of the faith." But we generally consider one who's into apologetics as some highly intellectual individual who is light years beyond us in their understanding *scripturally*, or their insight *theologically* (which Paul was both of those). But the reality is that when he set out to *defend* his faith here all he did was share his testimony *personally*. Why? Because that's the most powerful and profound defense that you possess, people can argue with you scripturally, challenge you theologically, but how can I argue against what God has done for you personally? and What makes your testimony so powerful is the fact that it's real, people can identify with it, if I start trying to drive a theological concept into someone's mind who knows nothing about the Lord, the odds of me sending them on a spin are pretty high. But if I just share with them the reality of what Christ has done in my life, they'll relate.

The beautiful part about the testimony is that we all have one, and we can all share it, you may not have tons of scripture memorized, but you know what Christ has done in your life. and It doesn't have to be super spiritual lingo, remember the blind man that Jesus healed there in John Ch 9? The Pharisees were drilling him about what happened, how it happened and all the rest. and Finally they're all, "Give God the glory we know that this Man is a sinner!" In regards to Jesus, and the guy says, "*Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.*" John 9:25 and He made it clear that the one who opened his eyes was Jesus, how could they argue that? They couldn't, and no one can argue what Christ has done in your life either, but that was his testimony. "All I know is that I was blind, but now I see, and the man who touched my life and changed me forever is Jesus." Every one of you who know the Lord can say that, don't overcomplicate the matter, just share with people what Jesus has done in your life.

Now something else we see here in this section is that as sincere as Paul was prior to meeting Christ, he was sincerely wrong. People often say, “But they’re so sincere..” unfortunately sincerity never saved anyone, if you’re not finding your righteous standing before God in the person of Jesus Christ alone, it doesn’t matter how *sincere* you are, you’re not *saved*. Paul says there in vs 3, “I was taught according to the strictness of the law and was *zealous* toward God as you are today.” That means he was exceedingly, and extremely anxious to obey God, you didn’t get anymore sincere than Saul of Tarsus in your desire to obey God. But he was sincerely wrong, he was looking to something other than Christ for his righteousness, and that’s exactly where his audience was at.

Paul wrote in Rom 10:2-4 “*For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, (speaking of the Jews) but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*” Which is to say that Christ is the end of every legal endeavor to establish self-righteousness before God, be it knocking on so many doors, saying so many repetitive prayers, be it eating this, or not eating that, none of those things commend you to God.

Only Jesus Christ will give you a right standing before God, the bible teaches that our righteousness is as filthy rags before the Lord. We just don’t measure up, because the standard is perfection, and once you’ve sinned (which all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God) no amount of good works, or legal regimen can change the fact that you’ve blown life. Nor can it atone for the fact that you’ve messed up, there’s no guru who can guide you to perfect peace, there’s no legal system that can save your soul, the bible says, “*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*” Acts 4:12 Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*” John 14:6

Now having said all of that we need to see the fact that Paul doesn’t condemn them here, but rather he *commends* them for their desire to do the right thing, and he says, “Hey, I’ve been there, done that, I understand where you’re at, as a matter of fact I went above and beyond the call of duty.” and He speaks of how he persecuted this Way (that is the way of Christ, He is the way) even to the death, but not being content with persecuting local believers, he went to the various regions, even to Damascus which was what, a couple hundred miles or so away anyway. and Now speaking of Damascus Paul makes the segue here from his conduct to his conversion. and The point he’s pressing home to them is that he was so set in his zeal as he was that nothing less than a supernatural close encounter with God Himself was going to change him.

Vs6-10

Now we looked at Paul's testimony back in ch 9 so we won't spend an extended amount of time here but there are a couple things we want to draw out. By the way I don't know if you realize this or not, but Paul speaks of his personal testimony no less than 5 times in the scriptures.

God wants to use the reality of what He's done in your life to impact the lives of those around you, don't be shy about sharing it.

The 1st thing we want to see here is the fact that Jesus said to Saul that he was persecuting *him*. Question, when did Saul of Tarsus ever persecute Jesus Christ As far as the record is concerned they never met face to face when Jesus walked the earth. But here's the deal, the body of Christ though made up of many members is still just one body. Even as your body has all kinds of members attached to it, arms, legs, hands, feet, fingers, toes, yet you're still just one body. and The bible teaches us that so to with Christ, though we may be many members as believers, we all comprise just one body of which Christ is the head. and What you do to one member of my body, you do to me. You can't cut off my big toe and say, "It's nothing personal Jeff, it's just your toe I had a problem with, not you." You mess with my toe, you mess with me, so to with Christ. Remember Matt 25? There Jesus taught us that what we do to the least of these (in reference to believers) we do unto Him, or the way that I neglect the least of the believers, I neglect Him. So as Saul was persecuting those who were looking to, believing in, and following after Jesus Christ he was persecuting Him. When you speak ill of a believer, you're speaking ill of Christ, when you backbite a fellow believer, you're backbiting Christ, that's what the bible teaches.

Now as a side note in order for Jesus to be talking to him that meant what? That Jesus was alive, not dead in a tomb somewhere stowed away by His disciples.

So now he's confronted with the risen Savior, and he falls to the ground, humbles himself in the presence of holiness, and he says, "Who are you Lord?" Then come those words back, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom *you* are persecuting." Then the next question, "What shall I do Lord?"

This is the 2nd thing I would have you see, anyone who's in love with, or seeking after, or who's met Jesus Christ in a personal, impacting, life changing way will be preoccupied by 2 primary concerns. and They are #1 Who are You Lord, and #2 What would you have me to do, in that order. 1st of all just wanting to know Jesus Christ in a personal, and intimate way, who are You? How can I know You more, there's just an inward drive to want to know in an ever increasing way, the person of Jesus Christ and Then out of the overflow of that is the ever increasing desire to want to be busy about His will, done His way, in your life, what would You have me to do?

You come into the awareness that Christ has apprehended your life for a reason, and you want to lay hold of that for which He's laid hold of you. If you've come to know Jesus Christ it's not because He wanted it to end with you, He's got a plan, and a purpose for your life, do you know what that is? Have you even sought Him in that way? Do you have a burden to be busy about what *He* would have you to do, not what I would have you to do, or how the church could use you (though if He leads you that way, that's wonderful) but what would *He* have you to do?

Remember when Paul was writing to the Philippians and he was speaking of His desire to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead? and He spoke of the fact that he hadn't yet attained, wasn't yet perfected, but he said, "*I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*" Phil 3:12 That's one of the primary burdens of the Christian life, 1st of all that I might know Him, but then out of that to be available *to* Him, to be used by Him. Paul recognizes here that if Jesus has laid hold of Him it's for a reason and he's seeking that out? Are you seeking that out? Remember Rom 12:2, "*...do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*" So to know Him, and to be used by Him.

Vs 11-13

Sort of ironic isn't it, how he could see physically but was blind spiritually, until the light of Jesus Christ shone around him and upon him, then he could see spiritually, but was blind physically.

So when Paul spoke about people being *blinded* to the gospel there in 2nd Cor, he was very aware of what he was speaking about. and He said, "*For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*" 2 Cor 4:1 and He spoke of how people how when the *light* of the gospel of the glory of Christ shines upon someone, they believe, and he spoke from personal experience. But don't you just love that phrase there in vs 13, "Brother Saul, receive your sight." Because that's exactly what he did, even though he'd been blind for a few days, he was seeing clearer than he ever had before.

Vs14-15

Did you catch what Paul just said, he's warming them up to the fact that he's been called to the Gentiles, he just hasn't come out and said it just yet. He let them know that God had called him to be His witness (vs 15) to *all men*, Jew and Gentile alike.

Of course vs 14 lends itself to the fact that we don't choose God, but God chooses us, and we have that paradox of biblical doctrines regarding freewill and the sovereignty of God. The fact of the matter is, that there's no one outside of God Himself who in there finite mind understand exactly where these 2 come together.

The bible teaches very clearly that God is not willing that *any* should perish, but that all should come to repentance. For God so loved *the world*, not just a chosen select, that He gave His only begotten Son so that *whoever* (which qualifies all mankind), believes on Him would never perish but have everlasting life. Jesus said, “*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.*” John 7:37 Again, “*...the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*”

Yet we understand equally that Jesus said, “*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit,*” John 15:16 and Again, “*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*” John 6:37 You say, “Well Jeff, how does all that come together?” and I’m going to tell you straight, I don’t know. What I *do* know is that 2,000 yrs ago God initiated a love relationship with mankind via the cross of Jesus Christ and that if you’ll just respond to that, and open your heart to Him, and allow Him to have His way in your life, you’ll come to find that He chose you to.

Notice what it is that God wants for those who’ve responded *to* Him and been chosen *by* Him. #1 That you should know His will, #2 That you should see His face, and #3 That you would hear His voice. Interesting, what were the 2 things that concern the believer, to Know Him, and to know His will, what is it God wants for you? That you would know His will, and see Him, hear *from* Him, or another way to understand that, that you would know Him, and then the overflow of that is that you would be a witness *of* Him, giving that testimony of what He’s done in your life. God wants you to have, the very things you desire of Him, the knowledge of Him, the understanding of His plan and purpose for your life, and all of those things are found in the knowledge of His Word, hearing His voice of His mouth.

Vs16

I just want to hit this quickly. This vs in no way, shape, or form supports baptismal regeneration, as if being baptized washes away your sin. Are we to be baptized? Absolutely, it’s an act of obedience as is any other, Jesus said if you love me, you’ll keep My commandments. But to hand your eternal salvation on an act done in your flesh is to take away from the finished work of the cross, when Jesus said, “It is finished” it was either true or it wasn’t. But I thought it was important to point out that the phrase, “Wash away your sins” in this vs isn’t to be connected principally with, “Arise and be baptized” but rather, “Calling upon the name of the Lord.”

Or to understand it another way, your sins aren’t washed away through baptism, but through calling upon the name of the Lord, “*For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.*”” Rom 10:13 Then that public identification, and the outward demonstration of the inward transformation takes place through baptism. and I would refer you to Rom 6 for further commentary on that. Now quickly as far as Christ’s commission

Vs17-21

Now just so that you know, anytime you find yourself arguing with the Lord, you're in the wrong. Jesus said, "Get out of Jerusalem they won't listen to you." "But Lord, they know me, I know them, they know how I was so against You that if now I'm serving You, it must be God, they'll listen to me."

By the way, you see where Paul said that he was consenting to Stephen's death? That means he was casting in his vote, he wouldn't have a vote unless he was a member of the Sanhedrin, so there's another little nugget for you as to how high up in the pseudo spiritual strata that he'd become there in Jerusalem, basically a member of the Jewish supreme court. But notice that Jesus didn't argue with him, he argued with the Lord, the Lord didn't argue with him. He just said, "Depart, get out of here like I said, I'll send you to the Gentiles." That was his specific commission.

Vs 22-23

Everything was going good, he'd captivated them and was sharing Jesus with them until 1 single word, "Gentiles." and They went ballistic, not because of the idea that Gentiles could be saved so much as it was that they could be saved exactly as the Jew could be saved. Paul placed the Gentiles on par with the Jews, he's telling them that all men everywhere are given everlasting life exclusively through Jesus Christ, the risen Savior, the Just and Righteous One and that it doesn't matter if you're Jew, Gentile, male, female, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, we all enter the presence of the Father through the door of the cross.

Now the commander has been setting there clueless, he spoke Greek, but Paul had been speaking in Aramaic, so here he's been watching them all spellbound as it were, at full attention, and now, like a flick of the switch they're it's another feeding frenzy.

Vs24-29

They weren't talking about whipping Paul, or beating him with rods, they were going to scourge him, which is what happened to Jesus, they were going to tear him to shreds so as to cause him to confess what he'd said, what crime he'd committed (which was none). But you weren't supposed to bind, much less scourge a Roman citizen with out a fair trial. So Paul after he's been bound for his beating, usurps his rights as a Roman, why wait till he was bound? Because then he has the commander right where he wants him, now he has the upper hand, hey if you can use your civil rights in a way to protect yourself, and propel the gospel, go for it, Paul did it all the time.

Vs30

So still wanting to get to the bottom of things, he commands the Sanhedrin to convene so that he might get to the bottom of things, so next week we'll get Paul's second hearing.

Prayer Points: God we Thank You that You Love all mankind everywhere the same. and That You gave You're only begotten Son for all of us the same so what whoever among us

would believe upon Him would never perish, but have everlasting life. and We thank You that as we call upon Your name, You wash away our sin, now would You help us to know You more, and be busy about Your plan for our lives, that we might avail ourselves to You to the full. Help us to be Your witnesses, to share the reality of what You've done in our lives, with the lost around us, give us boldness.

If you've never given your heart to Jesus you should know that it's God will for you to be saved, He wants to forgive you of your sin, to wash you white like snow and give you new life. Doesn't matter what you've done, how old you are, how young you are God loves you, Jesus laid down His life for you on the cross and if you'll just call upon His name, He'll wash away your sins, He's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. You may've come with family or friends or perhaps just come to check things out, but God has ordained that you should be here today because He wants to change your life and make you brand new. (If any man....)