

Sermon No. 418

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH

The book of Acts

CHAPTER 22

Scripture Reading: John 14:1-11

Dean Carter

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ACTS 21

Paul returns to Jerusalem

- Paul's heart was set
- Co-workers warned against him going
- The Holy Spirit seemed to be saying . . . don't go!
- But the Holy Spirit was preparing him . . . not stopping him
- And Paul *was* prepared!

Acts 21:13 *I know exactly what I'm doing. I'm fully prepared to be bound, and more—to die for the name of Jesus, the King*

- Recognized . . . set upon . . . beaten
- Roman commander Claudius Lysias had him arrested
- Are you the terrorist . . . no, I'm a Jew
- Paul asks to speak to the crowd . . . SET SCENE

Acts 22

Paul's Jerusalem Sermon

¹ "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now." ² And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent.

Then he said: ³ "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. ⁴ I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, ⁵ as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

- I am undeniably a Jew

Philippians 3:5 . . . *a Hebrew of the Hebrews, concerning the Law, a Pharisee*

To the smallest detail keeping every part of the Law

- Brought up in this city
- Taught by Gamaliel . . . rabbi . . . doctor of the Law . . . highly esteemed
- Zealous toward GOD . . . as you all are today

In fact, I'll show / prove to you how zealous I was . . .

- I persecuted Christians unto death

"You tried to kill me . . . but I succeeded!"

- I didn't just kill them . . . I hunted them down . . . I imprisoned them
- The Temple Elders can testify of this . . . I carried their official letters

In summary:

I was just like you . . . until . . . I had an encounter with Jesus . . . Jesus met me and my life was dramatically changed

Paul's supernatural experience

⁶ "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. ⁷ And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' ⁸ So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

⁹ "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. ¹⁰ So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' ¹¹ And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

¹² "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt *there*, ¹³ came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. ¹⁴ Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. ¹⁵ For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' ¹⁷ "Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance ¹⁸ and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' ¹⁹ So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. ²⁰ And when the blood of Your martyr

Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' ²¹ Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'"

- A Great Light from heaven shone around me . . . Shekinah Glory

Revelation 21:23 ²³ And in the city, there is no need for the sun to light *the day* or moon *the night* because the resplendent glory of the Lord provides the city with *warm, beautiful light* and the Lamb illumines every corner *of the new Jerusalem*.

I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting:

Paul knew who he was persecuting . . . with no idea who he really was

**Sometime zeal will cause us to condemn what is actually from GOD

The brightness of that light blinded me

**Utterly humiliated . . . he was led by the hand into Damascus

Then he tells the mob about Ananias . . . how GOD sent him

This man had amazing credentials as a Jew

The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth:

**Can you feel their anger building!

- He even told them how he returned to Jerusalem to pray in the Temple

Proof he wasn't against the Jewish ceremonies and rituals

- But . . . in the TEMPLE . . . I saw JESUS speak to me!
- Jesus said, get out of Jerusalem quickly, for the Jews will not receive your message concerning Me:

Ironically this is what is happening!

- Paul said, LORD, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You
- They know that when Stephen was stoned to death, I consented to his death
- But Jesus said, 'no' . . . I will send you far from here to the Gentiles

Note: when Paul was touched by GOD in Damascus, he was told then of his call to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15)

2 years later he is still questioning that . . . Paul had a lot to learn

Paul had hoped the crowd would see why he reached out to the Gentiles: That he was simply obeying GOD and His word to him

²² And they listened to him until this word, and *then* they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a *fellow* from the earth, for he is not fit to live!"

NLT ²² The crowd listened until Paul said that word. Then they all began to shout, "Away with such a fellow! He isn't fit to live!" ²³ They yelled, threw off their coats, and tossed handfuls of dust into the air.

That one word was . . . "*Gentiles*"

- I have noticed 'one' misplaced word can cause outrage
- They are outraged at the thought that salvation could be given freely to Gentiles

Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!

(23-24) The commander demands an answer

²³ Then, as they cried out and tore off *their* clothes and threw dust into the air, ²⁴ the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him.

- Paul experienced a lot of beatings

2 Corinthians 11:24-25

^{NLT 23} I know I sound like a madman, but I have served Him far more! I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. ²⁴ Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea.

2 Corinthians 12:10 ^{NLT 10} That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- Dreaded flagellum . . . men died or were crippled after a scourging
- Customary to scourge . . . *just not on Roman citizens*

²⁵ And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" ²⁶ When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman." ²⁷ Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes." ²⁸ The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship."

- Probably thought how could someone like this . . . purchase his citizenship

And Paul said, "But I was born *a citizen*."

- Uncommon to find an educated, devout Jew who was also a Roman citizen
- Unique background . . . GOD used it in a special way
- Just as he wants to use *our* unique backgrounds in a special way

²⁹ Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

- Serious violation of Roman rights to *bind* a Roman citizen without due process

From now until the end of Acts, Paul will be in Roman custody

- End of his time as a free man . . . but not as a witness for GOD

Claudius wanted to know for certain why Paul was accused

- Luke presents the Roman commander as a fair and upstanding man
- Though he did not know the details he worked hard towards a fair resolution

³⁰ The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from *his* bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

The Heart of the Matter

Lesson No.1: Regardless of how mature we think we are in the LORD . . . remember our works don't save people!

- When Jesus told Paul to leave Jerusalem . . . the Jews will not listen to you

NLT 19 "'But Lord,' I argued, 'they certainly know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in You. ²⁰ And I was in complete agreement when your witness Stephen was killed. I stood by and kept the coats they took off when they stoned him.'

- Paul's idea is, "Lord, they will listen to me when I preach to them about CHRIST"
- They trust me . . . they know all the things I have done . . . my story will be powerful
- Thinking that his works might give him *more* credibility with GOD and the people . . . so much so that no one could reject his message

Acts 22:14

¹⁴ "Then he told me, 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to (1) know His will (2) and to see the Righteous One (3) and hear Him speak

- Everyone needs to see (LOOK) and to hear (LISTEN) . . . to the LORD JESUS
- The theme repeats in Scripture

Isaiah 42:18

NLT ¹⁸ [*Israel's Failure to Listen and See*] "Listen, you who are deaf! Look and see, you blind!

2 Timothy 4:3

NLT ³ For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear

Lesson No.2: Regardless of how mature we think we are in the LORD . . . be sure that your faith is firmly grounded in the Truth and not just your emotions!

Nothing wrong about being passionate! But be careful your Christian life isn't controlled by your emotions

Acts 22:17-18

NLT ¹⁷ "After I returned to Jerusalem, I was praying in the Temple and fell into a trance. ¹⁸ I saw a vision of Jesus saying to me, 'Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won't accept your testimony about Me'

- This is the only time Paul mentions this experience . . . anywhere!
- Given how amazing it is you'd think Paul would speak of it often
- But Paul rarely, if ever, spoke about his emotions
- Instead, Paul's Christianity was based on facts
- He never relied on his emotional experiences . . . good reasons for that

Psalms 25:5

NLT 5 Lead me by Your truth and teach me, for You are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in You

Lesson No.3: Regardless of how mature we think we are in the LORD . . . don't put conditions on Salvation, because people come to Jesus as they are!

- These Jews of that day . . . didn't have a problem with Gentiles becoming Jews
- Totally OFFENSIVE that Gentiles could know GOD without becoming a Jew first!

We often have the same attitude . . . can a person be saved without first:

- Embracing our Statement of Faith
- Adopting our way of thinking
- Following our standards in dress and music
- The Jews were offended that Paul put the Gentiles on equal terms!
- But that is the message of Jesus – New Testament – you come to God just as you are – Jew, Gentile, foreigner, high, low, rich, or poor – but *you must come to Him through Jesus Christ*

John 14:6

NLT 6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me

Lesson No.4: Irrespective of how long you have been a Christian . . . remember where you came from!

Remember who and what you were before Christ!

- Paul had been a Christian for more than twenty years, but could still relate to those who were not believers

- I was once like you – perhaps worse

“I understand why you attacked me. I was once an attacker also. I understand where you are coming from”

- The hardest things for a mature believer is to find that common ground . . . Why?

Does that mean those you reach out, will immediately believe? Not necessarily!

- Four times Paul shares this same story . . . this was me BEFORE Jesus

EXAMPLES – PEOPLE SHUN THEIR PAST . . . AND THE PEOPLE OF THEIR PAST

Lesson No.5: Spiritual blindness is a terrible thing . . . to the extent that one can be a diligent student of the Word and yet not know Christ!

John 5:39-40

³⁹ “You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! ⁴⁰ Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.

The reason they failed to see the Christ of the Old Testament was, as Paul explains the matter, that “whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts” (2 Cor. 3:15)

Their preconceived notions of what the Messiah ought to be like and do blinded them to an objective evaluation of the character, words, and works of the Lord

Salvation is in Christ only

There is the fact affirmed by Christ that there can be no eternal life apart from him

John 6:44 For no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws them to Me, and at the last day I will raise them up.

Acts 9:15

“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel