

## Acts 22:17-30

### "The Mob Rejects The Message"

We left off last time w/Paul standing before this big crowd of people. Sharing the story of his conduct, his conversion & his commission. How he'd made it his mission to absolutely eradicate Christianity from the face of the earth. But after an encounter w/J.C. his life was forever changed.

There he was, on the road to Damascus, looking to incarcerate Christians, bring them to trial & put them to death. But about noon that day Jesus confronted him, challenged him & changed his life forever...

So Paul says, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Instant evidence of conversion, of transformation, going from being *against* Jesus to desiring to fully *serve* Jesus. You can always tell when someone has truly met J.C. because they want to serve Him, avail their lives *to* Him... Jesus said, "Arise & go to Damascus & there you'll be told all things which are appointed for you."

He comes to Damascus, a devout Jew by the name of Ananias comes, ministers to him & we love what Ananias says to him. He says, "*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. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.*"<sup>1</sup>

Family, this is God's heart, His plan for you! If you've had an encounter w/J.C. & He has opened your eyes, you've seen Him for who He is, have come to realize that Jesus is the way, the truth & the life & that no one comes to the Father except through Him...it's because He's *chosen you* that you should know His will (His word), see Jesus for who He is & that you might be His witness to all men of what you've seen & heard. How it is that Christ has made Himself real to you, how He's changed you, how He's saved you...

Of course implied in that is that what God has done for you, He can do for them too! That God has so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son, so that *whosoever* believes in Him would never perish, but have everlasting life. For *whoever* (ladies & gentlemen, that includes you) calls upon the name of the Lord (turns *to* Him, trusts *in* Him) shall be saved.

This is the message that Paul has been delivering to the multitude who moments earlier were trying to murder him. He's standing there, bloodied & bruised, a soldier on each side of him addressing this mob...

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<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ac 22:14-15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Vs 17-18

You know, we read over these things & perhaps because we're familiar w/them or maybe because it's in the Bible (& so amazing things are just kind of anticipated) we can have a tendency to just sort of gloss over them w/out really thinking about them.

Do you realize what Paul just said here? He said that he was praying in the temple & as he was in a trance, just sort of meditating, zoned into the things of the Lord, that Jesus actually appeared *to him* & spoke *w/him* in a vision! ... We're like, "Ok, cool..." It's flat out incredible is what it is!

Now again, (as we noted last time) Paul has been (& still is) seeking to make a connection & build a bridge between himself & those to whom he's speaking... In Vs 16 Paul was literally about *3 days* outside of his encounter w/J.C. In Vs 17 (Galatians fills in some details about this time period of his life) when he returns to Jerusalem it's been *3 yrs!* **During which time he'd been studying & being disciplined by the Lord in Arabia, then he went back to Damascus, then he returned to Jerusalem. & What he's demonstrating is that even after all that time he *still* honored the temple, went *into* the temple to pray & meditate & wait on the Lord... He was an observant Jew!**

Yes, he trusted in Jesus. Yes, J.C. had changed his life, but he wasn't against observing various Jewish ceremonies or traditions (as he'd been accused). He just didn't consider any tradition or ritual as necessary for salvation or sanctification. They didn't add *to* or build *upon* one's righteousness in any way.

But I want to draw attention to the fact that Paul was "*praying*". Last week we noted that Jesus was going to give Paul one of the most dynamic ministries in all of human history. What were the characteristics that this man embodied? What kind of person was he? #1 He was a man of the word. Educated under Gamaliel (one of the most distinguished rabbis of his day, & honestly in the nation's history).

Just read Paul's epistles. He was a man of God's word, he *knew* it, he *studied* it. He committed it to his heart & his memory. Today, if we want to know something, we just google it. & That's good, but it can make us lazy. Why study? The internet will tell you... Listen, if you want God to use your life (He can, regardless of what we do) you would do well to be a man or a woman of the word.

Paul told Timothy, "***Be diligent to present yourself* (Study to show yourself) *approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*"<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (2 Ti 2:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God wants us to share w/others the hope that we've found in J.C. The promises, assurance, encouragement & warnings of His word... we can't do that if we're never *in* the word... Even if you need to use google to help you find a Vs (that's no problem) but do you even know what Vs you're looking for? How do you know what the bible says if you're never spending any time tucking it away in your own heart? Paul was a man of the word.

Here, we learn that he was a man of prayer. Do you want God to use your life? Be a person of prayer. One who communes w/God. Cast your cares *upon* Him, bring your petitions *to* Him, seek *after* & give ear *to* Him.

What was Paul praying about? We don't know. If I was to guess I would say he was praying about ministering to the Jews, maybe asking God to open a door for him to share the message of J.C. & Him crucified w/them... Because when Jesus appears to him, what does He say? "It's not going to happen Paul; they won't receive your testimony concerning Me."

But guys this blows my mind. This happened some 20 yrs prior to this point in Paul's life, & yet up to this point, he's never even *mentioned* it! & He only mentions it now out of necessity... Most of us would be sure & broadcast an experience like this any opportunity we got... "Don't mean to humble brag or anything but when the Lord appeared to *me*... when He spoke to *me*..." We'd write books, go on speaking tours, pitch movies that might be made... Paul wasn't that kind of guy. He exalted, encouraged others *in* & stood *upon* the truth of God's word, not a spiritual experience...

His spiritual experiences were for personal *instruction* & personal *construction*, not public consumption. Paul kept his ministry, his public opportunities focused on the Person of J.C. & the assurance of the word of God.

### Vs 19-20

We get the impression that the Lord's word to Paul was probably a surprise to him. Why? Because he considered himself the ideal candidate to bring the gospel to the Jews! He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews (a "super Jew" if you'll allow me the term). ☺ If anyone knew how to connect the dots for these people & demonstrate to them the plan of God through the Person of J.C. through the scriptures... it was Paul!

& That's how Paul is trying to reason/rationalize w/the Lord here. "Lord, these people know me! I imprisoned Christians, beat Christians, I was even the guy holding the coats of those who were martyring Stephen while consenting to his death!"

In Paul's mind, these things would give him credibility w/the Jews & that *why he* should be the one to *stay* in Jerusalem and share the message of the gospel w/them. His testimony would be powerful/persuasive *to* them...

Now; I'm going to say this, then we'll move on. Jesus is saying, "Paul, you're not the man for the job here." Paul is saying, "Actually, Jesus, I'm the *perfect* man for the job." Guys, he's arguing w/the Lord! (The all-knowing, all-powerful Creator of the universe)!

Now; we kind of smile at that, but we are *all* guilty of this kind of thing from time to time. Maybe not by our words (though sometimes we seek to persuade God through prayer in a different direction), but through our attitudes & actions it's *very common*. "God, I know Your words says "this", but I really think I'm going to do "that" instead..." **It could be your opinion on dating or marrying a non-believer. It could be your opinion on homosexuality as opposed to what God's word says. It might be premarital relationships, the use of certain drugs in a manner they were never intended for. It might be something like God says, "Render to Me your 1<sup>st</sup> fruits" but we choose "last fruits" by making sure everything else is covered & if there's anything left we'll give it to God...**

It could be something as simple as speaking truthfully in love when you really want to cover it up or lie... Maybe you think you're called to something because you have a passion for it, but it's not where God wants to use you... (That was Paul's predicament). But here's the point. Just know this going into it. We're all going to have times where we argue w/God. Again, if not verbally than by my attitude, my course of action, my philosophy or mentality. But here's what you need to know. Anytime you argue w/God... You're wrong.

God's never going to hear me out & say, "You know what, you bring up a good point & I had never thought of it that way. You're right on this one." It's never going to happen. Now; will God give me my way occasionally? Absolutely. You've heard the phrase, "Be careful what you ask for, you just might get it."

Listen; God knows what He's talking about. He knows the thoughts He thinks toward you, thoughts of peace, not of evil, to give you a future & a hope. God's not trying to hold you back or keep you from something good. He wants the best for you, both now & in eternity. Paul wrote to the Romans, **"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>3</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Ro 8:32]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Which is to say; if God didn't w/hold Jesus from us (which is His very best) He won't w/hold something lesser from us if it'll truly help us or be good for us. Paul is persuaded that he's the man for the job. Jesus said, "No Paul... you're not."

### Vs 21

& For the last 20 yrs (w/the exceptions of feast days) Paul has pretty much stayed out of Jerusalem. His ministry has been primarily to the Gentiles, just as Jesus said. Of course, Jesus had told him initially (back in Ch 9) that his ministry would be by & large to the Gentiles. The Lord had already given him this *revelation*; this is what we might call, "Confirmation".

But again, Paul is making it clear that this idea to preach to the Gentiles wasn't *his*, it was *God's*. Surely, *now* they'll understand right?

### Vs 22-24

One word set them off. Like popping off a hand grenade right in the middle of them. What was the word? "Gentiles". Interesting isn't it? They were good w/Paul's conversion. ("You met *Jesus*? Ok. He's *alive*? Ok. He changed your life? Ok. He spoke to you in the temple? Ok...) But this crowd erupted in rage over one word, "Gentiles".

& It wasn't that he would speak & seek to convert Gentiles, *they* did that. It was that salvation could be given *freely* to the Gentiles, *exactly the same* as the Jews & that Gentiles had no need of the law or being brought 1<sup>st</sup> into Judaism. For them, the idea of Gentiles being loved & saved by grace through faith in J.C. alone was outrageous. That God would extend to Gentiles, the same offer as He would the Jews was on par w/blasphemy as far as they were concerned... You say, "Man, sounds like a lot of prejudice!" You know why? Because it was! Family, humanity is *filled* w/prejudice! Could be toward a political party, an ethnicity, or whatever! But let's come back to the message, "For God so loved... the world!"

There is no ethnicity, no political party, no sexual orientation, no rich or poor, educated or non-educated person or people whom God does not love! He wants us *all!* But we all have to come the same way, through J.C. You've heard the phrase, the ground is level at the foot of the cross... Suffice it to say; these people enraged & were ready to tear Paul apart!

What does this tell us? It tells me that we all have a choice to receive or reject the message of God's word. We talked about prejudices, we've spoken about the word saying one thing, us thinking another. When we come to those crossroads; we have a choice. Receive God's word; or stay anchored in our ways. They didn't receive it, they rejected it.

Now; let's remember. Paul is speaking to them in chains, roman soldiers on either side. But he's speaking in Aramaic, the soldiers can't understand him. As far as they knew things were going pretty good. The mob grew silent, listened intently... But then seemingly out of nowhere, they erupt & a riot is getting ready to break out.

From this point forward throughout the book of Acts, Paul will remain in Roman custody... The commander orders him to be examined under scouring... Not under a normal whip or to be beaten w/rods as we've seen previously. This was the same scouring that Jesus received, the flagellum which had multiple strands, embedded w/bone or balls of lead. People would often be crippled for life, if not die from this. This commander was wanting to know *exactly* what happened & this was Rome's way of extracting truth. You would be beaten until you confessed your crimes.

#### Vs 25-26

They began to tie him w/leather straps & stretch him over a rail. I'm sure Paul's heart was racing. But he waits till they bind him, why? Because then it puts *him* in the favored position. It was against Roman law to even bind a Roman citizen w/out due process, to scourge a Roman could be punishable by death both for you & your family!

That's why the centurion, immediately halts the process & informs the commander. He's already violated the law in binding him, to scourge him would probably be a death sentence.

#### Vs 27-29

We read this & think. "Man, if you could get out of trouble by simply claiming to be a Roman citizen, why not do this all the time?" Because again, the penalty for lying about your Roman citizenship was death. You can roll the dice if you want to, but if you can't prove your claim & provide the documents, you're a dead man.

So it wasn't something people lied about. & The commander is almost insulted. He's like, "Man, I had to purchase my citizenship w/a great deal of money..." He's looking at Paul all beat up & ragged looking & the implication is, "They must be giving these things away now."

Paul's like, "No, I was born a citizen." Not because he was from Tarsus. What he's saying is that his dad was a citizen, so he was born as a citizen. It means that either his father or grandfather was (for some reason) awarded the right of citizenship for some grand deed they performed for the empire.

It's at this point that the commander is realizing how unique Paul is... & he's worried for how he's treated him.

### Vs 30

He seems to be a fair & upright kind of guy. He didn't know the details but he's working hard toward a fair resolution. So he calls the Jewish supreme court together the next day for a formally informal hearing. & Paul is probably thinking, "Praise God. I finally get to speak to this body of men from which I've come." I'm persuaded that in the back of his mind, this is a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance & the opportunity of a lifetime.

I'm going to say this & then we're done. Paul was certainly a unique individual. Tailored for what God had planned for him. Grew up understanding the Greek way of thinking (in Tarsus) educated in the Greek language, received ivy league type training in the Mosaic law, was a Pharisee & a Roman citizen... & God would use these things in his ministry, he was able to minister effectively to the Gentiles because he knew their mindset, what things the Jews would unnecessarily try to bind upon them & how God's word rightly applied to them... (Music)

& Listen, God has prepared you individually, uniquely to be used by Him as well. The bible declares, *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."*<sup>4</sup> The question is are we asking God, "What would You have me to do?" Call to Him, & He will answer you & show you great & mighty things which you do not know...

The 1<sup>st</sup> thing God wants to show you is who Jesus is. If you've never received Him, never believed in Him, you can do that right now, right where you're at. Believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved...

Family; may the Lord be with. May His peace be upon you & His provision be rich toward you & may His Spirit rest upon you. Pray for one another, pray for me, & may God be glorified in your life.

### Prayer Points:

God we've heard the message, may we receive it rather than reject it. Turn from our mentality, our ideologies & simply submit to Your word. & May Your word bring forth fruit in our lives to the glory of Your name, in Jesus name. Amen.

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Eph 2:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.