

"Paul's Chains in Jerusalem"

Acts 22

Introduction: The last time we were in our study of Acts we finished our look at Paul's third missionary journey. In Acts 21 Paul had returned to Jerusalem for Pentecost and to bring the financial gifts to the saints that were in poverty. The elders at Jerusalem were concerned for Paul because of the hatred of the Jews toward him. The elders therefore convinced Paul to join 4 men who had taken a vow and Paul was to go with them and provide the sacrifices which they need as their vow came to an end. While he was at the temple, he was spotted by Jews that had come from Asia minor (the Roman providence) and they falsely accused him of bringing a Gentile beyond the court of the Gentiles. These Jews then stirred up the mob and there was an attempt to kill Paul. There was at the temple a Roman "peacekeeper," he was the chief captain of the band of soldiers. He then stepped in with other Roman soldiers and they lifted Paul above the crowd to save his life.

Notice Acts 21:35-40

When we ended the last time, we considered how this mob would be used to get Paul to Rome. They were accountable for their actions and at the same time they were used to carry out the will of God.

This now brings us to where we are tonight.

➤ **Paul's Defense**

Notice Acts 22:1

Here in this verse, we see that Paul is going to give his defense. But what is he defending? He is defending the change in his life. He will start out this defense explaining how he used to live and then he will tell his audience Who changed him. I think it is very important to notice how Paul addresses his listeners. He begins by calling them "men, brethren, and fathers" and so we see his approach is kind to a group of people who desire to take his life. Paul is certainly a man who is surrendered to the Spirit because we see in his defense the very Spirit of our Lord.

Luke 22:33-34

³³ *And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*

³⁴ *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

Paul looked upon his accusers as family. He cares about them.

I also see something else in Paul's words that needs to be pointed out. Notice the words of Stephen in Acts 7.

Acts 7:2

² *And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,*

Saul/Paul stood there and listened to the sermon of Stephen that led to his death. The sermon had great impact upon Paul over time. He was set against what Stephen said but he could not shake the words. Then after Paul was saved, we see the results of Stephen's sermon in his life. Notice the words from Bible Hub.

"Sanctity is power, greatest when associated with suffering. Stephen was not merely good, keeping clear of what is evil; he was holy. He had a spirit that reflects a higher world — "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." This sanctity illuminated his bodily frame, and was made perfectly plain in his dying prayer. This was not lost on Saul."

Application:

I point this out because it is a great reminder to us of how our stand and our words can impact people in ways we cannot see. It may be many years down the road after we are gone. But the point is when we have an opportunity to speak the Truth into the lives of ours, we MUST NOT allow the opportunity to get away. The opportunity that is before you may be the only chance that the person who is listening has to hear the Truth of God's Word. Your words also may just be what God uses to turn a person away from a sin that is leading them down a path of judgment. Let us not be discouraged when they push back on what we say. They stoned Stephen but the words he spoke will never be forgotten. They are still touching lives today.

James 5:19-20

¹⁹ Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

²⁰ Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Notice Acts 22:1-4

In verses 3-4 Paul now explains to them that he was just like them. He was born in Tarsus and then he was brought to Jerusalem to learn at the feet of Gamaliel, and was zealous toward God just as these people were. The difference was that Paul now understood that his zeal and his personal gains had no spiritual value. He was not commending their zeal because he knew it was without knowledge.

Philippians 3:4-8

⁴ Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

⁵ Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

⁶ Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

⁷ But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

The Jews whom Paul was speaking to were the same.

Romans 10:1-4

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

² For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Application:

Just as a reminder to all of us zeal is not salvation. There are many people today that are zealous about their religion and even about God but if they have not come to Jesus Christ it means nothing. Jesus is the way of salvation and there is no other way.

Acts 4:12

¹² Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Even tonight as we study there are thousands upon thousands who are caught up in Ash Wednesday and they are sincere and zealous, but if they do not know Jesus Christ, they have no relationship with God. There is no other means of forgiveness apart from the blood of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:22

²² And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

1 John 2:1-2

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

² And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Notice Acts 22:4 again.

The Words "THIS WAY" are a reference to Christianity. Paul was telling his listeners that he too persecuted those who were of "THE WAY" even unto death. He is identifying with these people who are against him. He was one of the ones who invented the persecution that they were inflicting upon the people.

Notice Acts 22:5

Paul was letting them know that he was the one who spearheaded this persecution that they were bringing upon him. He was the "temple spokesman" sent to extinguish Christianity before he was saved. The very temple they were trying to protect was the temple Paul defended while he was a Pharisee.

Application:

As Paul identifies with these rebels, we can look at this and know that no one is beyond the grace of God. God's grace can save even the most sinful person we can possibly imagine. It is our responsibility to pray for them and to share the Gospel with them. No matter how deep they are in sin they too can be saved if they are willing to repent and turn to Jesus Christ and accept Him as their Savior.

Why does Paul take the time here to identify with those who are set on killing him? Because he wants them to understand that God did not just save a sinner but He saved the man who defended the temple just as they were doing. It is interesting in his defense that he does not share the Gospel. He desires for them to know what he was before and to understand why he was different.

Notice Acts 22:6-7

Notice that Paul says that it happened at noon. Why is that important? Because noon was the brightest time of the day. So, at the brightest time of the day there was an even brighter light that surrounded him. His response was to fall into the dust of the earth.

Application:

When I read of Paul's response of falling to the ground I am reminded of people who boast of a coming day when they will stand before the Lord and they will question Him concerning

what He permitted them to experience in life. Let us notice how John responded when he found himself in the presence of the glorified Lord.

Revelation 1:10-11, 17

¹⁰ *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,*

¹¹ *Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

¹⁷ *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

John was the disciple whom Jesus loved. He was closer than all the others. Here we read that when he saw Jesus in all of His glory he fell at His feet as a dead man. He was paralyzed as he was exposed to the brightness of His glory. What will it be like for believers who are out of fellowship and have wasted their lives? What will it be like at the Great White Throne for all the unbelievers who lived and died in their sin?

Notice Acts 22:7-8

Here was where all of Paul's Pharisaism fell away. He came to realize that his persecution was against the Lord Himself. All of his zeal was wrong! The determination to exterminate Christianity was directed at the Lord.

Conclusion:

As we end tonight, I will just remind all of us that any persecution against any believer is persecution against Jesus Christ. Any accusations, any words that are meant to discourage or hurt in some way are all against the Lord Himself because we are the body of Jesus Christ.