



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 22:1-30

“Paul's Great Apology in Jerusalem”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are again thankful that we are able to gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and to look into the Scriptures. We pray that Thou will be our teacher and guide as we seek to understand the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. We are grateful to Thee for him and for the marvelous way in which Thou didst use him. We thank Thee for the teaching that the Holy Spirit gave him in which he has been so wonderfully gifted in passing on to us. And we thank Thee for the way in which it has brought us closer to Thee, to know Thee and to know the Son of God the Lord Jesus Christ, and to have the assurance of eternal life, through him. And Lord we pray Thy blessing upon us in this hour of study. May our minds and hearts be quickened into a deeper understanding of the Scriptures? We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight we are again, following the Apostle Paul at the conclusion of his third missionary journey, when he has made his way back to the city of Jerusalem. And the subject for tonight is “Paul's Great Apology in Jerusalem.” And we are turning to Acts chapter 22 in our subject Scripture tonight will be verse 1 through verse 30. One of the things that this passage brings to my mind is the ultimate purpose of God about which men of today seem so frightened and very much disturbed. Many would think twice

before subscribing to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, when he said, “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends. Rough hew them how we will.”

There seems to be a very definite doubt of an ultimate purpose of God in things. If one reads the newspapers for example or reads the current periodicals this is one of the things that really comes home to you. At least it does to me. And one of the reasons that there is so much confusion and perplexity is the fact that there is in our generation, no real contact with the fundamental facts of the word of God. There are so many things about which we are concerned as country and as a people and as Western Society, that find their solution very plainly in the Bible, but which nevertheless are solutions, which are almost unknown to our generation, because there is no contact with the Scriptures.

Recently, in reading some of the literature concerning Jerry Falwell that brought that home to me. Mr. Falwell has been very vocal in charging that our society is afflicted with homosexuality because it has departed from the Lord. And he traces of course the rise of AIDS and other matter specifically to that. And the responses to Mr. Falwell have been very interesting. As many of you know I don’t necessarily subscribe to everything that Jerry Falwell says. He is a Christian man. I admire his courage. At times I don’t think he thinks quite as clearly as I would like to see him think. And there are certain conclusions, which he draws from the things that he is talking about that to my mind, have some question about them. But on the other hand to read the responses to him reveals that those who are responsive to him have even less understanding of the Scriptures. The letters to the newspaper. The words of columnists like Carl Rowan, and others who attacked him publicly about a week or two ago in a lengthy comment on the editorial page of our newspapers illustrate the fact that there is little understanding of the word of God, and as a result there is little understanding of the basic sources of the problems that we have. Many people are troubled by tend Bible in science, for example, and they do not understand how it’s possible to believe in the light of the science of the 20th Century.

Others have doubts about the word of God because of the state of the world itself. That the world would not be in such a predicament if it were really true that the Lord is God, and that he has a purpose for our society. Why the unending bitter struggle for existence amongst the nations, for example if God is really a sovereign God and in control of things. And I think that many are just simply troubled by the things that are closely connected with their lives, their sufferings, their difficulties, the people that are ill, the people that they know are in the hospitals and suffering, wars, from which are never it seems free, and death itself. That seems such a problem, such a trial. So we are living in days in which there is a great deal of doubt about the divine purpose. Is there a purpose and is God working toward a specific purpose in our affairs.

It seems to me that in the life of the Apostle Paul we have an illustration of the fact that there is a divine purpose in things, and things are moving according to a plan that God has devised many, many ages ago. Darkness and futility and night are characteristic of the world about us, but when one has the viewpoint of the Scriptures, then of course he can find comfort and direction and the truth in the Scriptural understanding of divine things.

Now, in chapter 22 of Acts, we find again account in which the apostle describes his conversion. This time, however it is described in the context of the fact that he has been taken prisoner by the Romans authorities in Jerusalem and now, he has requested the privilege of defending himself, and he is going to defend himself before the Jewish people and before some of the Romans on the city of Jerusalem itself. So we are looking then, first of all, at Paul's analysis of his conversion again.

Now, remember he has gone to Jerusalem as the conclusion of this third missionary journey. He has sought out the elders of the city with the gift of money, which he brought from the churches of Greece. For Paul we said that was very important because he thought that gift of the money from the churches in Greece to the poor in

Jerusalem would cement the churches together and that there would be a sense of the divine unity that exists between the local churches scattered over that part of the world.

It meant a great deal to him, and I gather that because he refers to it so often in his letters, and so when he had delivered the money to Jerusalem, he was told of course that there were people in the city who were very upset over Christianity. There were many Jews who were believers and they were zealous of the law. And Paul had a reputation for telling people that they were not under the law, and so they counsel with the apostle to be careful. And in fact, they urged him if you would, to take a vow or at least have some relationship with some who had taken a vow. And so Luke says in the 24th verse of the 21st chapter, “Them take a purify thou self with them, and be at charges with them that they may shave their heads and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning Thee or nothing, but that Thou thy self also walkest orderly and keepest the law, as touching the Gentiles.” And so on, and they remind Paul of the decision that had been made in the previous Jerusalem counsel to not offend the Jewish believers who had not yet come to an understanding of the fact that they were no longer under the Mosaic Law.

Now, we last week, made the point that Christians are free from the law. But they are also free to put themselves under law if they wish under certain situations. In other words, Paul said, “To those who were without the law, he became as one without the law. To those with the law, as under the law, thought not really being under the law.” In other words, a Christian is free and he is freed also from bondage to his freedom. He doesn't have to always make a point of his freedom. And so in the case of Timothy and Titus, one of them was circumcised, and another was not, and there was no contradiction because that was the freedom that a Christian has. So a Christian can, in the midst of people who observe himself, put himself under that law even though he is not under the law. Well, that was a very important principle of freedom which the apostle believed in and you will find it through the book of Acts.

Well, at any rate the apostle was found one day in the temple area, and as a result of it, a riot took place and finally the chief captain of the band and when all Jerusalem was in an uproar had to take the apostle and preserve him from possibly being killed in the temple area. And so we read in the latter part of chapter 21 of how Paul was lead to the castle. Verse 37, he said to the chief captain,

“May I speak unto Thee? And the Capitan said, “Can you speak Greek? Aren’t you that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar and led ust out into the wilderness 4000 men that were murders. But Paul said, I am a man which I am a Jew of Taraus, a city in Cilicia. A citizen of no mean city. And I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto to the people.” And when he had given them license, Paul stood on the stairs and beckoned on his hand unto the people and when there was made a great silence he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue saying.”

Now, I would like to read the next sixteen verses,

“Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith, I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying

unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. 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.”

Now, that means something like, they heard the noise, but they did not understand the words. Now, I know exactly what that is because my hearing is not as good as it was when I was fifteen. That’s putting it mildly. And lots of times I hear people say things, and I know they have spoken, but I have to ask for them to repeat what they are saying because while I heard the noise, and heard the sound, and it sounded like they were speaking language, I wasn’t quite as able to distinguish the words as at one time I was. So evidentially they heard noise, but they did not understand, and that’s the meaning I think of what Paul is saying here. This is a technical question, and involves actually a case that follows a verb in the Greek language. One verb requires or may take two cases, and in one case, it’s a reference simply to hearing a sound. An in another case, it’s a reference to hearing a person. And in this case the sense is that they heard the sound, but they didn’t understand what was being said. It was not intelligible speech to them. The 10th verse,

“And I said, What shall I do, LORD? 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. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be

his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

Now, isn’t that an interesting statement there in verse 16, and we will stop at that. So the apostle now, is in the hands of the Romans authorities, and as he is moving away evidentially they were to take him in a place, where it would be protected from the Jewish people, he requested the privilege of speaking to the Jewish people. And he spoken unto them, or began to speak unto them in the Hebrew tongue. And there was an immediate silence because after all they did not realize apparently who he was and so when he began to speak to them in the Aramaic tongue, for that’s the meaning of the sense the Hebrew tongue. They recognized that he was in a sense one of them, just like if there was to be a big riot in Atlanta, and somebody would stand up with a Georgia cracker accent, people would be inclined to listen much more readily than if he came from Brooklyn and started to speak to them, so he spoke to them in the Aramaic dialect and they began to listen. There was a sudden hush. The apostle gives us in a sense, a very good illustration of how one ought to handle himself in a very difficult situation because you’ll notice he accommodates himself, to his Jewish heroes. He doesn’t compromise his views, but courteously and in an accommodating way he does point out things that are similar, things about which they can have some fellowship.

Now, notice what he does. He says for example that he is himself a Jew. That would be something inclined to make them listen. He said, he was born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, but he was brought up in this very city at the feet of Gamaliel.

Now, Gamaliel was one of the great Rabbis. In fact, he was one of the seven Rabbis who had the privilege of being called our Rabbi. There were three different ways in which the Jewish people spoke of Rabbis. They spoke of a person who was a teacher, a simple teacher as being Rab, which means simply a teacher, but then Rabbi means my teacher, and that’s a more exalted position. But Rabban as the suffix of the first person

plural and so that means our teacher, and there were just seven of them who were called Rabbans, and Gamaliel was one of them, so you can see that this is something of some significance. The apostle is calling to their attention that he was taught by one of the famous Rabbis. You could see a Rabbi would be. It would be nice to be called Rab. It would be nicer to be called Rabbi. It would be still nicer to be called Rabban. That was the way you advanced in the cult of the Rabbis.

Some of you know, I have mentioned this before but many years ago, before I came to Dallas, I was in the insurance business, and I had been converted, and so I was serving as a counselor at a youth camp outside of Birmingham in Double Oak Mountain Park, and I was in my middle twenties or so. I think I was about twenty-six, and in my particular cabin I had eight boys, and these boys ranged all the way from one or two boys who were sons of influential men in the city of Birmingham to a couple or three or four who were just children of ordinary people, some of mining families outside of Birmingham forty or fifty miles away. And there was one boy in particular as one of the most interesting boys, and he took a real liking to me for some reason.

He was a southern Baptist boy and brought up in the Southern Baptist church, and he and I were together for the two weeks or so quite a bit, and we had a lot of fun. I had less sense than I have now. At least that’s my evaluation. Others have different evaluations of it, but anyway we had lots of fun, and at night not being too well acquainted with what went on in Christian camps, I played ghosts in camp. And had lots of fun. [Laughter] But anyway the final night of the camp, we all gathered in our cabin, got down on our knees and we prayed and this little boy who had become very attached to me, prayed something like this. He said, “Oh, God.” He knew that I was coming to Dallas to go the theological seminary. I had told him that, and he said, “Oh, God we pray that Mr. Johnson, after he goes to theological school in Dallas, will become Brother Johnson, and then Lord we pray that he will become reverend Johnson. And Lord we also pray then that he will ultimately become Dr. Johnson.” So he had a regular hierarchy of

preachers. Mr. was nothing much but you could become Brother, and that meant that you were on a little different level, and then when you came reverend that was little higher still, and Dr. that was the top of the pedestal.

Well, Rabban Gamaliel was on the top of the Rabbinic pedestal, and so the apostle mentioned that, that he had studied under Gamaliel, taught under the perfect manner of the law of the fathers. And furthermore he was zealous toward God as ye all are this day. So he talks about his background. He talks about his zeal. And he commends the Jews for their zeal. Later on, reading in the Epistle to the Romans in the 10th chapter. Remember Paul says, “I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” It’s great to have a zeal for God, but it’s important that we also have a zeal for God according to knowledge, so he commends their zeal, and says that’s fine, to be zealous for God, and furthermore he goes on to speak of the fact that after his conversion he was enlightened by a devout Jew. He mentions Ananias over here, and he calls him in verse 12, “A devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews, Hebrew dwelleth there is Damascus.”

And then he talks also of his past record in verse 19 through verse 21, and how he was very active in Judaism, and in fact had actually stood by the Jewish men who stoned Stephen to death, and had held their clothes, and consented to Stephen’s death. So he is trying to establish some sympathy with them. Of course since that time, things are different. And the apostle has been a man since that time, as man who has turned diametrically the opposite way, one hundred eighty degrees and is going another way.

This afternoon, I took out some notes of mine, and I read an interesting thing that I had forgotten about. It was the instruction that was given over a hundred years ago. In fact about one hundred and twenty five ago for travelers for the Wells Fargo Stage in the west. These are the rules that the people who rode those stages were expected to follow. And this is the way they read. “Abstinence from liquor is requested, but if you must drink, share the bottle. [Laughter] To do otherwise makes you appear selfish and

neighborly. Buffalo robes are provided for your comfort for the cold weather, hogging robes will not be tolerated, and the offender will be made to ride with the driver. Don't snore loudly while sleeping.” How a person is able to do that I don't know. [Laughter] How he is able to control that, but anyway. “Don’t snore loudly while sleeping, or use your fellow passengers shoulder for a pillow. He or she may not understand. Forbidden topics of discussion are stagecoach robberies, and Indian uprisings.” [Laughter] We live in the same kind of society today, when you get on the plane, they’ll tell you a little sign up there, don’t make any jokes about guns or pistols when you get on the airplane today. “Well, don’t talk about Indian uprisings, and stagecoach robberies.” But then there was another thing there, which said, “If ladies are present gentlemen are urged to forego smoking cigars, as the odor of same is repugnant to the gentle sex.” That’s what they used to be. [Laughter] We’ll exterminate that from the record. [Laughter] “Chewing tobacco is permitted but spit with the wind, not against it.” [Laughter]

Now, that illustrates a point there are people who naturally spit with the wind. That is they are individuals who find out what the train of thought of people is, and they fall in with it, and therefore they never make much of an impact on society. They just find whichever way the wind blows, and they spit with the winds, but then there are some who do, because they feel it’s necessarily, because the truth requires it spit against the wind. And if I may use that figure, the apostle was one like that. And one can certainly see that here as the apostle describes his conversion. He did not have to stand up and give this speech before these Jewish people because I have a hunch that he pretty well knew what was going to happen. A lot of them were going to be very unhappy about it, but he was just naturally a person who would stand for truth in spite of the consequences.

It reminds me of a coach who was asked about a certain football player. Someone said, “What do you think of this football player?” And he said, “Well, I don’t want to pass too much judgment on him, but I will tell you this. I have never.” Oh, it

was a referee who was asked about a football player, and he said, “I’ll tell you this about him. I have never had to pull him off the bottom of a scrimmage. He is always on the top.” Well, the apostle was one who was in the midst of the things that were happening and often making the tackle.

Now, Paul says he was a Jew. He was brought up in Tarsus. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel. You know there is an interesting line in Joseph Klausner’s book from Jesus to Paul. I read the page this afternoon, and in this book in which Mr. Klausner traces the history of movement from Jesus to Paul, he has a whole page devoted to a section in the Rabbinic writings in which Rabbis were quizzed, and make statements concerning impudent people, and in fact a page of historical references is devoted to a Rabbi’s response, Gamaliel’s response, to an impudent person. He is not named, but he’s called an impudent person, and Mr. Klausner said that without question the impudent person in the Rabbinic literature associated with Rabbi Gamaliel is the Apostle Paul. He is the person that they are speaking about. He feels absolutely certain.

There are a number of silly questions that the Rabbi responds to and it’s possible that Paul in his unconverted days did ask those questions, but at any rate the apostle mentions the fact that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. In verse 4 he says, that he persecuted this way. That’s the description of Christianity of course and in then in verses 5 and 6, he describes how he went to Damascus.

Now, Damascus was about one hundred and forty to one hundred fifty miles away from the city of Jerusalem, and as the apostle went out of the Damascus gate, we are told in the other accounts he went out with a troop of men, and I can just image him, since he passed out right near the place where our Lord Jesus was crucified that he might well have looked over to the hill of Calvary and uttered a few explicatives that he was acquainted with regard to him. I can imagine him saying, “You deceiver, we are going to stamp out the testimony that is being given to your false heretical doctrine.” And then he went on his way and it usually was journey of five to six days, and so finally when he

reaches the slopes of Mount Hermon, this magnificent experience of his occurs, and we don’t know the precise place, but it might be one of those places, where on the slopes of Hermon he could look down on the city of Damascus, which someone has described at that time as a handful of pearls in a goblet of emerald.

It was noon. The sun’s rays were shining. They were piercing down like swords, and some have even suggested that the apostle had something like a sunstroke. We read in verse 6, “And it came to pass that as I made my journey and was come now into Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me, and I fell unto the ground and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.”

What an eruption must have taken place in heart and mind of the Apostle Paul when he heard that. A revolution within, and I can imagine that he might have thought immediately you died on the gallows back in the city of Jerusalem. In that poor and insignificant country, and world history had written over you, and I can just imagine now our Lord in effect saying, “No, that is not true.” And Paul replying, “I’m beginning to understand now, world history did not stride over you, but you have stridden over world history.” “I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest.” Well, we have talked about his conversion. There is no need to talk further about it. I would like to go on down and just make a comment or two about one or two things that are said here.

You’ll notice in the 10th verse, when Paul says, “What shall I do?” That the Lord said, unto him, “Arise and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.” That word appointed is a very interesting word. This is the word that is found back in chapter 13 verse 48, where when Paul preached in Antioch and Pisidia, remember Luke, says and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed, and so the ordination to eternal life, is in ages past at a point in history they came to faith in accordance with foreordination of God. And here Paul is told, “It shall be

told thee of all things, not which you are to do, but all things which are appointed for you to do.”

Now, Paul recognizes in this the general movement of the hand of God, and that’s why he writes in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8, 9 and 10. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” So the good works that Christians are to do are works which God has prepared before hand that they should walk in there. And the apostle here is told that very thing by the Lord. “It shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.”

Now, in the Greek text at this point, this is in the perfect tense, which means essentially that they have been appointed and the results of that appointment have continued to the present time. They have been appointed for thee and you are under the compulsion of the divine appointment. “And when I could not see for the glory of that light being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came to Damascus, and when Ananias a devout man according to the law having a good report of all the Jews dwelt there came unto me, (And remember back in Acts chapter 9, Ananias is told, how he can tell Paul. He is told,) “When you enter you will find that he is praying.” That’s a magnificent sign of Christian isn’t it? A Christian is a person who prays. Well, that’s not listed here. That’s back in chapter 9, but anyway that’s how Ananias would know Paul. And he came and stood, and he said, “Brother Saul receive thy sight.” And the same hour Paul says, “I looked up upon him. I saw him” and he said, “The God of our fathers hath chosen thee.”

Now, that’s an unusual word for choice. It’s not the word ordinarily found in Paul’s epistles. It’s the word that literally means something like to take a thing into one’s own hands. In fact, it’s built on the noun for hand in Greek. So the God of our fathers has taken things into his hand, in order that you might know his will and see that just one

and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth, and the voice in which this verb is found, lays a great stress on the personal interest of God in this. In other words, God has such a personal interest Paul in your ministry that in the human sense he has taken things into his own hand, and he has determined that you are going to do these things. “For thou shalt be as witness unto all men of whom thou hast seen and hears, an now why tarreist thou, arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins calling on the name of the Lord.”

Does that mean that a person must be baptized in order to be saved? The Authorized Version text says, “Arise, be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” One might think that, and in fact many large religious organizations of various kinds would take that view. That one must, in order to be saved, be baptized, and that you cannot really say that you are a Christian until you have been baptized in water.

Now, just as you must believe. Just as you much repent, just as you much as ye must confess your faith, you must also be baptized in water, and then having completed the four steps some say, then you can say that you are truly saved. But until that takes place, you cannot know.

Now, I would lie to suggest that that is while apparently at first glance, a plausible interpretation, really contrary to the biblical teaching, and I’d like to deal with it by looking at this text, more carefully if may. In the first place, I am going to make just a few incidentally changes because the form of the verbs demand this, and while it won’t effect that issue, it’s important for my purposes that I be actuarial. What Paul was told was this. “Why tarreist Thou? Get yourself baptized, and get your sins washed away.”

Now, it is very, very important to note in the original text, and I am going to explain it to you so that you won’t be lacking anything ever though you are not able to understand Greek. It’s very important to understand the relationship of that word calling. Calling on the name of the Lord to the preceding verbs.

Now, this is participle in the Greek text, and it is what we call an adverbial participle or a participle that expresses by the fact of its particular kind of construction that it describes adverbially an action. That is an action that’s related to one of the main verbs, and in this case, the verb that just precedes it.

Now, when you have adverbially participles, this by the way is not a disputed point. You may render it by the use of prepositions for example in order to give the precise sense that the Greek has but which we may not have in English. In other words in this case, we may render this way. “Arise, get yourself baptized, and get your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.” In other words that participle is a participle of manner. It describes that manner or the means by which the sins are washed away.

Now, I would like then to suggest to you in the light of this that this text should be repunctuated. Now, of course if you have a modern version, it may or it may not. Some are and some are not. The NIV again, in my opinion has made a slight error again in it’s rendering here in punctuation. The New American Standard Bible is fairly accurate, and also surprisingly the New English Bible is fairly accurate as well. But I’d like to suggest to you that you should eliminate the common after sins, and then add the word by, if you have the Authorized Version. Let me read it in case you don’t have it.

“And now why tarreist thou? Arise, (that’s all right.) And be baptized, and wash away your sins (Eliminate the common after sins, and add the preposition by.) And wash away your sins by calling on the name of the Lord.” So what Paul is told, is he’s told to arise. He’s told to get himself baptized. And he’s told also to get his sins washed away, by calling on the name of the Lord. In other words it’s the calling on the name of the Lord that brings the forgiveness of sins, the washing away of the sins. The baptism therefore is to be understood by other references to baptism. It is a testimony to what is transpiring. So “Arise. Get yourself baptized. Get your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.”

Now, someone might say, “Well, Dr. Johnson, that’s very plain to you, and are there not some individuals who might disagree with you. Yes, you’ll find someone who will disagree on about every verse in the Bible. You can always find that. But the question is are they right or are they wrong, and I think that when one looks at this in the original text, if his mind is open, if he understands the Greek language I think that he will see that what I am suggesting is the most likely interpretation of this text, but I would like to add one other thing.

Now, notice it is Paul who is being told these things by Ananias. Now, after this, Paul wrote some words about calling on the name of the Lord. Do you remember? Well, I am going to ask you to turn to Romans chapter 10, in verse 13. Romans 10:13, the apostle has something to say about calling on the name of the Lord. And I am going to read verse 11, while you are finding Romans chapter 10, and you’ll be there at least by the time I get to verse, 13. Paul is arguing the method of salvation and he is also arguing point, concerning Israel’s disobedience. And he says,

“For the Scriptures saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (Now, notice he doesn’t say, is baptized and believes, or believes and is baptized shall be saved, but,) whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Now, that’s the same word that is found in Acts 22:16, calling upon the name of the Lord. So the apostle states in Romans 10:13, that calling upon the name of the Lord is the lone basis for salvation. It is therefore likely that that is Paul’s interpretation of what happened in the street called Straight in Damascus. That’s the way he understood the words that were spoken by Ananias to him. And Ananias then says, “Why tarry, arise, be baptized, and get your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.”

We often sing, “What can wash away my sins?” And we say, “Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” Well, I think the apostle would have agreed with that. One might ask the question, well when then was Paul converted? On the Damascus Road or in Damascus?”

Now, that’s not an easy question to answer. It’s very much like the answer to the question, “When was Abraham saved? Was he saved when he was called out of the war of the Chaldees? Or was he saved finally when the Lord took him out and he saw the stars? And Moses said Abraham believed in the Lord and it was imputed to him for righteousness.” The chances are the salvation of Abraham and the salvation of Paul has some similarity, and also possibly are similar to our own experience. That is sometimes salvation takes place outwardly in stages, in the sense that the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit leads us on to a climatic relationship at which salvation occurs. It’s not easy to answer this question.

I am inclined to think that when the apostle was on the Damascus Road that a certain significant transformation took place in him. He came to understand there that Jesus of Nazareth was a heavenly being, who could speak to him still as a divine being, and he called him Lord, and no doubt that produced this tremendous revolution within Paul’s thinking, and he had to go back over all that he had been taught from the beginning and all the things that he had wrongly understood, and now try to put them all together. Later on he spent some time in Arabia, and possibly that was further straightening out of the vast knowledge that he had of Jewish and Rabbinic things and squaring them with his Christian experience.

We know that faith is made up of three things. It is made up of knowledge. It is made up of ascent to that knowledge or those facts, and then it is made up of trust, personal trust, knowledge, ascent, trust. *Notitia asensus, fiducia*, the three Latin terms which theologians have often used to refer to these things, and one may have knowledge and not have *fiducia*. One may have knowledge and ascent, but not *fiducia*. We all

know people who know the facts of the gospel but who are not saved. And we even know people who have the facts of the gospel, and they ascent to them, and say, “Yes, I believe they are true.” But they themselves have never had Christian experience. Christian experiences the experience of personal trust. They don’t know that yet, and so it is possible, I say only possible. There are some things that I know for certain, there are some things that I don’t know for certain. I didn’t have to tell you that, but anyway it’s possible that the Apostle Paul had received that was the equivalent of knowledge on the Damascus Road, Jesus is the Lord. And then as he came finally into and was told, he should go to stay in the street called Straight, well then in the ascent to it, we may have further ascent on Paul's part to the knowledge that he had. And then finally when Ananias speaks to him, and explains to him that he too has been the object of the sovereign working of God bringing him to Paul, and that he was the Lord’s messenger to tell Paul certain things about him, and his ministry. Then at that point, it all came together and Paul arrived at his climatic trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Although he was the object of efficacious grace up to this point.

I suggest that to you only as a possible explanation of these events. At any rate, and we need to stop at 8:30, in verse 17, we read,

“And it came to pass that when I was come again to Jerusalem, (And Paul is still now talking to the crowd of Jewish people.) When I came to Jerusalem even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance. (Now, notice they’ve stuck with Paul to this point, and the riot has not yet occurred.) And I saw him saying unto me make haste, and yet thee quickly out of Jerusalem for they will not received thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord they know that I am prisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee, and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. (And then the Lord replies again in this vision, in the trance that Paul had in the temple and the Lord

said to him.) Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. (And that, Gentiles that word, Gentiles was like a match to gasoline. That was the word that stopped their ears. And so we read,) And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.”

We all know how certain words are really the matches to the gasoline. For example with some people it’s the doctrine of the deity of Christ, that Jesus Christ was truly God. One will listen and listen and listen until finally a Christian will say, “We worship the Lord Jesus Christ because he’s the second person of the Trinity and he is God. God the son.” And ah, there is an explosion of unbelief, or there are some who say, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God, and all questions of ethics and morality are ultimately to be decided by what God says in the Scriptures.” Ah, that’s a match to the gasoline than lies in the minds of many of our century.

People talk a lot about morality. If you ask them, “What is your basis of morality?” They usually look puzzled, because they usually haven’t thought through those things. Ultimately, the only basis of morality that is satisfactory is the divine revelation from the Lord God. That’s the ultimate answer to all questions. What do the Scriptures say?

Now, there’s a perfectly good philosophical reason, why that should be so. But many never get that far. But many never get that far they never ask those questions. You’ll find in our papers, our newspapers are filled, scatter with it’s the moral thing to do, or it’s an immoral thing, or it’s an obscene thing, or it’s immoral, or it’s moral. All these terms thrown around, but nobody ever ask the question, “What is the basis of morality?” Or the resurrection of Christ that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, and that he is alive today, and he is working to the consummation of his purpose. And then if you want to have some matches put to gasoline among Christians, mention the doctrine of election.

Well, the idea that the word of God should go to Gentiles, and suggested by this is Gentiles should stand on the same plain as God’s ancient people who had the revelation of God and the truth of God was more than the Jews in the temple area could stand.

“And they gave him audience unto that word, Gentiles, and then they lifted up their voices, and said, away with such a fellow from the earth, for it us not fit that he should live. And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air, The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and he saw that his life was at stake, he decided that he would give him the third degree, and he would do it by scourging.”

Now, scourging was an ancient way of getting truth out of people. Scourging was done by a wooded stick or a wooded club to which was attached thongs, and then on to the thongs were attached pieces of medal or pieces of sharp stone, and they would flog a person with the scourge, and it was relatively easy to get things out of individuals who were being scourged because often they were left lame for life. The apostle says he was scourged three times, in 2 Corinthians, said also the Jews beat him five times with forty stripes save one. But in this case the apostle said,

“Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? (And these were Roman men. They thought that he was a Jewish man.) And when the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, he said, look you better be careful what you are doing, this fellow is a Roman. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, Are you a Roman? Paul said, nigh. (That’s what he really said, but that meant yea. The Greek word in nigh.) He said, yea And the chief captain said, with a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, I was born free. (In other words his father was Roman as well, had Roman citizenship. He was Hebrew.) Then straightway they

departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.”

And so the story continues with the apostle’s defense before the counsel, and we’ll take a look at that the Lord willing next week. Our time is up, let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the bravery and the courage of the apostle and also for the marvelous truth, which is unfolded in the dealings of the Lord Jesus with his great servant. Oh God, give us something of the same determination to follow the teaching of Holy Scripture, even if it means moving contrary to the thoughts and movements of our particular day. Lord, if there should be someone here who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray that Thou wilt bring them from knowledge through ascent, to trust in him. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.