

**Paul's Arrest, Part 4: The Attitude of Paul**

Scripture: Acts 22:15-30

Code: 1787

1974

We come again this morning in our study to the book of Acts, and I call your attention again to our passage in chapters 21 and 22. We've been sharing together in this rather lengthy portion for the last several weeks. I think this is the fourth week that we've been in this portion from chapter 21 verse 27 through chapter 22 verse 30, and we will draw it to conclusion this morning. Up until chapter 21 of Acts, we have been following the ministry of the Apostle Paul as a free man. That is, he has traveled under the direction of the Holy Spirit without bondage to those places and those cities that God has led him to. He has had a great and glorious ministry.

From chapter 21 on, he becomes a prisoner; and from here on out until his death, he remains a prisoner. His ministry is not diminished in any sense. It's only different, so we see Paul from chapter 21 to the end of the book in chapter 28 as a prisoner. Now during the time of his being a prisoner, he gives six different defenses of himself, of his actions, of his attitudes. The first such defense is given here in chapter 21 verse 27 through chapter 22 verse 30, and so we've entitled this section "Paul's Arrest and First Defense." But as we have been studying this, more than just looking at the historical narrative as it flows in the text, we have also endeavored to see a principle behind the narrative, and that is the idea of giving a positive testimony in a negative situation.

In the midst of his arrest and defense, we see principles of how to give a positive testimony in a negative situation; and we have endeavored to draw those principles out. Now we have suggested several principles; and, today, we're going to conclude the suggestion of those principles as we look at the final part of the narrative; and, basically, the last of the principles that we'll be considering has to do with attitude. In giving a positive testimony, attitude is extremely important. The attitude that I have toward the unbeliever is going to color the kind of testimony that I give. If I really love the unbeliever as Jesus did, as Paul did, if I really have a deep concern and honest care for his soul and for his life, as Jesus did and Paul did, it's gonna affect my testimony toward him. And if I really love him, the negative in his life is gonna be superseded by the positive of my love; and it won't really matter how antagonistic he is or how unlike he ought to be he is, I'll love him anyway, if my heart is right.

And so in giving a positive testimony in a negative situation, attitude then becomes critical...Many Christians, through the years, and even today, have been accused of having wrong attitudes, and I

think it's true in great measure. Christians are superior often in their thinking. They think they have something the lost don't have, and tend, rather than to reach down to lord it over, there are some who exude a kind of holier-than-thou, aloof, separated attitude. Then Christians have also been accused of being cliquish, clannish, unloving, uncaring, unsympathetic, and in some cases, as I said, I think it's justified.

You know, you can become so self-righteous and so involved with the body of Christ and with Christians that you sort of isolate yourself from the unsaved, and the only attitude left for them is sort of a condemnation; and in an effort to avoid defilement, you forsake them rather than loving them and being with them as Jesus was, as Paul was. A genuine, caring, honest, deep love for the lost is basic to effective testimony. I'll put it simply. I believe in my heart that you could verify the fact that the people who are the most effective in reaching the lost are the people whose love for them is the most genuine, because we tend to do what our love motivates us to do...

The Christian who is superior acting, who has a stern, condemning, self-righteousness is one who really doesn't love those people as Jesus did; and the result of it is, instead of winning people, he alienates people. So another factor in a positive testimony in a negative situation is true love, true concern. You know, it's often easy to treat people like statistics and kid yourself into the fact that you really love them when all you do is rack 'em up. Say, "Well, I led three more to the Lord this month." I'm not sure that's the love of the lost as much as the love of the self...

Have you ever gotten into a testimony where you're sharing Christ, and the thought that comes into your mind is, "Wait till I tell them that I led someone to the Lord. Aren't I something spiritually? That's kind of a sick thought, but I've had it..."

Now, in this passage, Paul displays for us the right attitude toward the unbelieving, and that's basic to affecting them for Christ. You take it from the standpoint of God. First God so loved the world, then God gave His Son. This is true. This is basic. Paul makes the statement of his love for Israel. He loves Israel so much, he could wish himself accursed, and it's out of that that he loves them, that he gives them the gospel.

Now, remember, that, as we come to chapter 21, the Apostle Paul has concluded his third missionary tour. He's arrived in Jerusalem at the time of the feast of Pentecost. It's a time when Jerusalem is jammed with people. Now when Paul was on these three missionary tours, he had both a positive and a negative impact. Positively, he won a lotta people to Jesus Christ and started a lotta churches. Negatively, he alienated Jewish people everywhere he went. The first thing he'd do when he went into a town was go to the synagogue, because he loved Israel so deeply, and so should we; and he would preach Christ in the synagogue; and some of the Jews would believe and the rest of them would be adamantly antagonistic; and, for the most part, they would begin to hate him...

And, as he went from town to town, this kind of hatred was built up, and it was built up until there was a whole world of Jewish people, mostly the leaders, rather than the populace. The populace being effectively influenced by the leaders who hated Paul. On this tour to Jerusalem, all the way along the tour, he faces the hostility of antagonism from Jewish leaders. Now, to make things worse, here he arrives in Jerusalem at feast time, and guess who's also in Jerusalem at feast time. All the Jewish leaders from all over the world. So he arrives in an explosive, volatile situation at the same time as his enemies. He's surrounded by the world of enemies that hate him.

As we pick up the scene in verse 27, he's in the temple; and he's in the temple carrying out a particular Jewish custom in order to show the Jewish Christians that he still held reverence for their traditions; and as he's carrying out this custom, he is seen there by some of these Jews who hated him. These non-Christian Jews, antagonistic Jews who hated him, they see him in the temple. In fact, it tells us in verse 27 that they were from Asia Minor, a Roman province, a Roman territory. Paul had ministered there effectively for three years and founded no less than seven different churches from influence through his ministry. He had a dramatic influence on that area; and here they see this, their arch enemy in the temple; and the flames of their hatred are fanned by the very sight of the man; and they realize that they, not only have their own resources, but they've got the resources of all the rest of these people from around the world who hate him just like they do, and the whole populace of very Judaistic, legalistic Judaism, and everybody there can be potentially whipped into a frenzy to bring about his death; and so they start a riot.

And from verses 27 to 30, they whip the riot up. Now, in this explosive situation, we're gonna draw out the spiritual principles that we see exemplified in the life of Paul as he gives a positive testimony in the midst of this horribly negative situation; and, as I said before, this is the only way to witness effectively, because, if you're really making a dent in the system, it's gonna be in a negative situation.

Now, on the your outline, which we'll use the same outline we've used for all these weeks, we'll just follow the basic flow of the text. First of all, the attack of the mob. They have whipped this mob into a frenzy by accusing Paul of being against the Jews, against the law, and against the temple. They have added to those general things the accusation that Paul has taken a Gentile into the forbidden territory of the temple and, therefore, he should lose his life. Which was a lie, he had not done that. Nor was he against the people, nor was he against God, nor was he against the temple.

All of this was a whipped-up frenzy. This was all a lie concocted to generate mob violence against him, and it worked. The mob went furiously together in verse 30. They took Paul. Drew him out of the temple, and they shut the doors of the temple, and they are about to kill him in verse 31.

We come to point 2 in our little breakdown, the arrest of the Romans. Immediately when the Romans saw the riot going on in the temple, their garrison that was ready for such times of riot, stationed in

Fort Antonia, right to the northwest of the temple ground, steps descended right into the courtyard. Down came the centurions and their soldiers to break up the riot. Verses 31 to 36, then, is the Roman arrival that breaks up the riot. Now, the Romans assume that Paul has done something awful, so they arrest him. In fact, the commander-in-chief, the chiliarch, the chief captain, he thinks that this is the Egyptian revolutionary that previously had led a riot against Jerusalem. He just assumes that from what's going on, and so they grab Paul, and they shackle him, and they drag him up the stairs through the mob, carrying him over their heads, and they set him up on the top of the stairs, heading for the barracks. And, really, the Romans have saved his life...from the murderous mob.

Now, as we saw that, we saw the first principle of giving a positive testimony in a negative situation. We saw Paul totally quiet, totally submissive, allowing himself to be shackled and taken a prisoner. The reason is because God had told him this was gonna happen, hadn't He? Chapter 21 verse 11, the prophet Agabus had said he was gonna be bound and taken prisoner. Earlier than that, chapter 20 verses 22 to 24, the Holy Spirit told him in every city that he was gonna be a prisoner, that things bad were gonna happen, so he just accepts it as God's plan.

Now, notice, principle No. 1 in giving a positive testimony in a negative situation, accept the situation as from God. Now, we've seen that, haven't we? You must accept the situation as God's will. Paul did that. If you think all God wants to do is make you lie in a bed of roses you've got it wrong. God wants to bring you testings and trials and difficult situations, for those are what make you strong. God wants to bring you into very difficult confrontation with an evil world, because that's how people are confronted with the gospel, so you might as well get ready to know the fact that God is gonna bring you into negative situations; and when they happen, accept them as from Him.

Now, then Paul, secondly, after he was arrested, moved into principle No. 2, which is create an opportunity. Once you've accepted the situation as from God, create an opportunity. We find that in point 3, the apology of Paul, beginning in verse 37; and this is a long one. It goes all the way from 37 clear through chapter 22 verse 21. That's his whole long defense.

But we see that when he gets to the top of the stairs, they're starting to take him to the barracks, he says to this guy, he says to the commander, he says, "Could I say a few words?" And the man does a double take, because he says, "Can you speak Greek?" talked to him in Greek. He thought he was just a rabble-rousing Egyptian who probably didn't know much of anything, let alone cultured Greek.

When he heard he could speak Greek, he thought, "My, that's a marvelous opportunity." And then Paul said, "Yes," he said, "I can speak Greek. I'm a man from no mean city. I come from Tarsus of Cilicia," which was sort of a high-class place; and he said, "I'm not the rabble-rouser you think I am. May I speak?" And the man thought, "My goodness, this'll be a great opportunity for me to find out what's going on here and find out what the accusations were. Hear the man's defense. So he said, "Fine, you speak."

You see what Paul did? He created his own opportunity. In the midst of a negative situation, he created a positive opportunity. Then he began to speak in verses 1 through 5 to the whole crowd. I imagine the man thought he might have spoken in Greek, since everybody spoke Greek there, but he didn't. He spoke in Aramaic, the Hebrew language. The Hebrew tongue is Aramaic, the vernacular. And he did that because he wanted the people to know that he could speak the way they spoke. He wanted to be conciliatory. He wanted to...to go to their level and have common ground; so he spoke their language, which probably was somewhat of a shock to the leader, because he didn't speak it as well. The reason we know that is because when Paul got all finished, he wasn't too sure what he said.

Now, it may have been that he had theological problems and couldn't understand the implications; but, basically, it was because he didn't understand the language very well. So Paul speaks in their tongue. He says, "I'm a Jew." Verse 3, "I studied at the feet of Gamaliel," who was the leading Jewish teacher of his day. "I was taught according to the perfect manner," that is the legalistic interpretation of the law of the fathers. "I was a Zealot," which is the farthest right-wing in the Pharisees' party. I was extremely zealous just like you are; and what he does there is say, "You know, I was every bit a Jew like you, and I even was zealous enough to do what you're doing today. I've persecuted people just like you're persecuting me." And, in a sense, he justifies their action.

And then he says, "Not only that, why, I was supported...verse 5...by the high priest and the whole Jewish Sanhedrin." And that's principle No. 3, beloved, in those five verses. What's he saying? Principle No. 3, giving a positive testimony in a negative situation. Do everything you can to win your audience. Establish common ground. That's what he did. He established common ground. He says, "You know, I understand how you feel. I'm one of you. I went through this. I know your motives. I understand your true zeal, etc." He does everything he can to win their attention, their interest; and, hopefully, they were saying at this time, "You know, this guy's not so bad. I mean how can you knock a guy who was born a Jew, studied with Gamaliel, was a right-wing on the Pharisees' party, had orders from the high priest to do everything he did, and he just justified our motives. In fact, this guy is really nice. What are we doing to him? How did we get into this mess?"

Most of the mob hadn't got the faintest idea what's going on. Like any mob, a few people start the fight, and everybody piles in, and don't know what they're doing; and so Paul conciliates the crowd. Now, it's very important in giving a positive testimony in a negative situation. You don't wanna alienate everybody immediately. You wanna find common ground for conciliation and establish whatever that is...and, really, it can be as simply boiled down to this. You talk about what they're interested in. Great way to witness to somebody is to ease into the conversation about Christ by meeting them where they are, not dragging them over where you are.

Now, immediately, then, he begins his testimony, and we said that it's divided into three parts. The first part is through verse 5, and that's the part before his conversion. He talks about his conduct

before his conversion, and we've covered that in detail. The second part is the circumstances at his conversion, verses 6 to 16; and, there, he tells the whole story of his conversion; and we've considered that in detail, all except the last verse.

Now, you remember what he said about all that? Let's pick it up at verse 6, and I'll read it to you. "It came to pass that, as I made my journey...remember, this is the testimony to a wild mob, and bunch of Roman soldiers standing around him...It came to pass that, as I made my journey and was come near to Damascus...he told 'em what he was gonna do there. He was gonna get some Christians, drag 'em back to Jerusalem, imprison 'em...About noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground I heard a voice saying unto me, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?'" And, of course, he's laying there with his mouth in the dirt, and he's hearing this voice out of heaven, "Why persecutest thou Me?" He must have know immediately what it was, because he was persecuting Christ. "And I fell unto the ground," he said, "And then I heard the voice, and I answered...verse 8...'Who are You, Lord?'" Just wanna make sure. "He said unto me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.'"

You know what that was in itself? That was the confirmation of the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead. That was the shortest sermon in the New Testament on the resurrection. If Jesus talked to Paul, then Jesus was alive. What Jesus? Jesus of Nazareth. Paul made sure that the whole thing got in there just so they'd know, Jesus of Nazareth was alive. He's just preached the resurrection to them, only they probably weren't expecting it. The buzzing probably was, "Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus of Nazareth. He talked to Paul? Didn't we crucify Him? Is that resurrection myth true?"

"And they that were with me saw indeed the light." Now, that's a beautiful confirmation. He says, "In case you have any question, I had a whole lotta people with me who saw the same light, fell on the same ground I fell on. The only difference is they didn't hear what I heard. That message was special for me." And so Paul's saying, "You see, what happened to me was divine, supernatural act, an act of God." And that's important. "And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' and the Lord said unto me, 'Rise and go into Damascus. It shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.'"

In effect, he's saying, "You know, I was going to Damascus minding my own business. Bang, I hit the dirt, bright light, voice outta heaven, 'Go do this,' I went. I was blind, and I went. If you wanna indict somebody for what I am, you better talk to God. He did it. I couldn't see...verse 11...for the glory of the light. I was led by the hand by those who were with me. I came to Damascus. A man showed up by the name of Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews who dwelt there."

He makes sure they know that Ananias was not a anti-Jewish character. "He came to me, and he stood and said unto me, 'Brother Saul, receive thy sight!' In the same hour, I looked up upon him.' And then he said this...listen...'The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His

will and see that Righteous One...that's a Messianic term describing Christ...thou shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard."

Now, just get this. Paul says, "I'm walking on the road. I fell on the ground. I saw a light. A voice came out of heaven. Said, 'Do this.'" I got up, and I went and did it. All of a sudden, a man came along, gave me my sight, said, 'The God of our fathers hath chosen thee.'" Now, every Jew standing there knew who the God of our fathers was. Now notice, friends, this is the key. The fourth principle, the fourth principle that we gave you in a positive testimony in a negative situation is exalt the Lord. Exalt the Lord.

Say, "What do you mean by that, John?" I mean this. Make sure that if anybody rejects your testimony, in order to do it, they've gotta reject God. You say, "Why do you want 'em to reject God?" I don't want 'em to reject God. I just want 'em, if they're gonna reject, to make sure they know they're rejecting God, because that's the issue...When my testimony is complete, nobody should walk away rejecting my experience. They should walk away, either accepting or rejecting my God. That's the issue...and Paul made sure that if they were gonna deny him, that they were gonna have to deny God, the God that they claim was their God, the God of their fathers. The God of Isaac and Jacob, Abraham.

"The God of our fathers hath chosen thee. That thou shouldest know His will and see the Messiah and hear His voice and be His witness. Paul, this whole thing is a sovereign act of God." You see how powerful this testimony is? Paul says, "You cannot accuse me of being anti-Semitic...verses 1 to 5...I am a Jew in every sense. You can't accuse me of chasing after Christians and becoming a traitor and getting won over by these Christians. You can't accuse me of that. The reason I am what I am is because God invaded my life and made me this way. If you wanna argue, you'll have to argue with Him. If you don't like this, you'll have to talk to heaven about it."

Now, do you see what he's doing? He's making the issue squarely where it has to be. If they deny what happened to Paul, they're denying God. If they reject Paul, they reject God Himself. That's the issue...When you give your testimony, beloved, make sure that what you're giving testimony to is the miracle that God has wrought in your life, not the new you, not just the practical outsides of the new you, but what God has done. The clearest testimony is that testimony which leaves a man only one option: to either accept the truth about God or to reject it. Not about me. Not about you. And that's what Paul did.

Well, even when God is sovereign, and He is, and I believe in the sovereignty of God. People always ask me that, and I always say, "Absolutely." Do you believe in election? Of course, it's in the Bible. He's chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. How could I not believe it? Do you believe that nobody gets saved unless God calls him first? Absolutely, "No man comes unto Me except the Father...what?... draw him." Of course I believe. It's in the Bible. "All that the Father gives to Me shall

come to Me," said Jesus. I believe absolutely in the sovereignty of God; but, beloved, I also believe that a man has to respond to God's sovereignty, and that's exactly what we come with in verse 16. And when Ananias has said all this, he says, "And now what are you waiting for?" Now what is the implication? You gotta do something about this. "Arise, be baptized, wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Now, you see, here, then, is the balance of salvation, the response of the man. God is sovereign. God did all the...the initiating. God slammed him on the ground, made him blind, brought him Ananias, went through the whole thing, told him what He wanted him to do. Every detail was sovereignly ordained of God before the foundation of the world. In fact, the book of Revelation says, "Your names were written in the book of Life from before the foundation of the world."

Yes, I believe in the sovereignty of God. Yes, secondly, I believe that man must respond personally by making the proper choice, and so he says, "What are you waiting for?" There is a response necessary for salvation. There are some people who believe everything, but they never make that response. It's one thing to believe at all. Something else to respond to it. That's necessary.

I was thinking about the time I was speaking to the USC football team before one of their games last season, and I had occasion several times to do that, and went into Heritage Hall, and my ex-football coach, who was an assistant with John McKay last year, introduced me to the team before I spoke on this particular occasion. He got up. I'll never forget his words. He said, among other little introductions about my background and stuff, he said, "I want you to know," and he kinda hung his head when he said it, "that everything John tells you is true. It's all true. I know it's true. I've just never accepted it personally." He dropped his head. That was his introduction. You coulda heard a pin drop in there, but he...that's exactly where he's at. I've been sharing Christ with that man ever since we used to ride on airplanes together to football games; but his hang-up is the personal commitment of some things in his life that he's not willing to let go of.

To say that God has brought about all these circumstances of knowledge and information does not preclude the fact that man has to respond to that; and so he says to him, "Call on the name of the Lord. The result will be your sins will be washed away. Then to make that publicly clear, be baptized. That's what he's saying; and so he's asking for a response.

Now the statement of verse 16 has been kind of the key verse to people who teach baptismal regeneration. They say, "Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins." And the idea that water can wash away sins. Now, lemme just speak a minute about this. Can water wash away sin? No. I'll give you a good illustration of it. If water could wash away sin, everybody would be saved. Why? Everybody's been in the water. You say, "No, only certain water." What water? Holy water. No, no, where did you see that? Only Jerusalem water. That'd mean everybody in Jerusalem would be saved, who's ever dunked in the Jordan. No.



No, you say, "Well, that's right, then. Water doesn't wash away sin." All right, if water doesn't wash away sin, then it doesn't wash away sin, any water doesn't wash away sin. Either water does or water doesn't, and since we know it does not, we can just stay with that. You say, "But what do you mean here then?" Well, lemme take it a step further. If Ananias was saying, "Paul, be baptized and wash away your sins," that would be the first time Paul ever really clearly heard the standard of salvation, right? This would be God saying to him, "Here's how to get saved. Get baptized and wash away your sins." Then if that was true, if that's how Paul got saved, how do you think he'd tell others to get saved? Same way, wouldn't he? If it was get baptized and get saved, that's what Paul would preach.

Let's see what he preached. Romans 10, and it's important to know what he preached, 'cause whatever it was, he got it from the Lord. Romans 10:9, he tells us something interesting. He says, "This is the word of faith which we preach." What is it you preach, Paul? Remember what Ananias told you that first day, Paul, do you forget that. Here's what I preach, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be...saved." Do you see any water there? See any baptism there?

Obviously, Paul didn't get that message from Ananias, did he? Hum, well, that's interesting. Verse 10, "For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, with the mouth confession is made to salvation." It's simply a matter of believing and stating that belief. You say, "Well, if it doesn't mean in verse 16, 'Be baptized and wash away thy sins,' what is it saying?" Watch. The break comes here. "Arise and be baptized."

Now watch this. "Wash away thy sins...doing what?...calling on the name of the Lord." The thing that modifies wash away thy sins is the phrase calling on the name of the Lord. Do you know how to get saved? Get baptized? No, do what? Call on the name of the name of the Lord. That's the message Paul got. Look at it, Romans 10:13. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be...what?...saved." Now, do you see what message Paul got that day? He got that message. He didn't get the message, "Get baptized and get your sins washed away." He got the message, "You'll be saved when you call on the name of the Lord." That's the modifier. That's the way to interpret the verse. The New Testament never teaches that a man can be saved by water. Teaches that a man is saved by grace through faith, that confessing Jesus Christ is Lord, believing in his heart means salvation.

Calling on the name of the Lord. What does that mean? That means to ask God to be all that He is in your life. Calling on His name, calling on His fullness, appropriating all that He is unto yourself...You say, "Well, what does the baptizing have to do with it?" That's the public testimony. Since your sins have been washed away by calling on the name of the Lord, arise and make it public. Baptism was the symbol, the outward symbol of an inward reality. Says Paul didn't make any big deal out of baptism.

First Corinthians 1:13, very interesting. "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name...name of Paul?" And he's showing that there's no sense in having little factions of people in the church. Verse 14, "I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius." Now, if baptism equals salvation, that's a very strange statement, isn't it? "Boy, am I thankful I didn't lead any of you to Christ except Crispus and Gaius."

"Lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name. Oh, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I know not whether I baptized any other." Now watch this. "For Christ sent me not to baptize." Yikes! Not to baptize. What'd He send you to do? "To preach the gospel." Did you know that baptizing and preaching the gospel are two different things? Therefore, baptism isn't part of the gospel. Salvation is apart from baptism. Baptism, folks, is an outward work, and you can't be saved by works, right? Ephesians 2:8 and 9. It's only a visual testimony to an internal transformation. That's all. Paul says, "I thank God I didn't baptize any more of you, and God did not send me...Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel." Two different things.

Go back to Acts 21. Ananias says, "All right, Paul, do something about it," Paul does. Praise God, Paul did believe. He was baptized. You can check it out, Acts 9:17 and 18. Don't look it up now. You can look it up on your own; but he was baptized, gave his life to Christ. Now, in all of this testimony, what is so fantastic is that he gives all the glory to God. Have you ever read his testimony in 1 Timothy 1, and he wraps up his testimony in 1 Timothy 1:17 by saying, "Now it's a God immortal, invisible. The only wise God, be glory and honor, Amen." His whole testimony resolves itself in God's glory, and that's what we're trying to say. Exalt the Lord. If people are gonna deny, then let 'em deny God, not your experience...

Jesus said, "If you lift Me up, I'll draw 'em in to Myself." That's the priority. Paul told the Corinthians, he said, "When I came to you, I didn't come with fancy words and cute sayings or stories about myself. I determined in my mind I would know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Exalt the Lord...Well, what has Paul done? He's totally exonerated himself. They can't accuse him of anything. They can't say, "Paul, you did this." He'll say, "No, God did this to me." If you wanna indict anybody, indict God. Man, does that put pressure on them. Whoo! Their own God...and so powerfully he turns the tables. You know who's really on trial now? They are. This is what Jesus did. Before Jesus was done with His trial, Pilate was on trial, and the Jews were on trial, and the whole of the chief priests and rabbis were on trial, and Jesus was sitting was sitting in the seat of the judge; and Paul turns the tables on 'em. He says, "Now you folks are on trial because, if you're gonna reject me, you're gonna reject your own God. So make your choice."...God did all of it. That's the way your testimony oughta come across, people.

All right, now the third section of his... of his defense includes his commission after his conversion. You'll notice in verse 15 that he was told at that time just to be a witness to all men, and it never got specified to the Gentiles until later. Here comes part 3 of his little defense, verse 17. Three years after his conversion, he returned to Jerusalem. During those three years, he was in Nabataea and Arabia. That's from Edom on the south, Petra, all the way north to Damascus. That whole east bank of the Jordan, Paul roamed for three years. The end of the three years, he arrives in Jerusalem, and that three-year period is discussed in Galatians 1:17 and 18; and in Acts 9, it tells us of his arrival in Jerusalem.

Then he picks up in verse 17, "When I came to Jerusalem... three years later after his conversion...even while I prayed in the temple," and that's an important note because it shows them that, even as a Christian, three years later, after being a Christian, he still holds reverence for Jewish customs. He still is in the temple, and this is a very conciliating statement to these Jews whose whole life surrounds the temple, and since a Christian can pray to God anywhere, he can just as well pray to God there as anyplace else. So he did that as a conciliation, and because his own heart was still accustomed to the things of Judaism; and this is, again, to try to win them.

"So I was praying in a temple, and I was in a trance." The Greek word is ecstasy. "I was in ecstasy." This is a divine high, if you will. It's a state of being transported out of the normal senses. It's going to a dimension that you can't exist in apart from some kinda supernatural experience. It's the same word used in Acts 10:10, you know, where Peter went to sleep on the roof at Joppa, and he was transported into a trance and saw a sheet with all the animals on it, and God told him to go to the Gentiles and so forth. So sometimes God took His choice servants and gave them a consciousness at a level beyond the normal and natural senses of man. This is a divine act...

I can only illustrate it by saying this. You're not the only people...you're the only people in this room, but you're not the only beings in this room. You're the only ones you can see, but this room is occupied. Well, I know it's occupied by the Holy Spirit, and He's a person, and He's here. In addition to that, there are probably a lotta angels here, ministering angels, if nothing else. Ministering to some of you, maybe to all of you; and if there are angels here, and the Holy Spirit's here, I got a good idea there's some demons here. You know, there may be the biggest war going on right around up in here somewhere, and none of us even have the faintest idea what's going on.

Now, the point is, if you were allowed to see with spiritual eyes, you could perceive a real world of real spiritual activity going on right here, but you can't, because you're locked into the natural senses. Part of what your new body is gonna be able to perceive is that world. When you are translated and enter into the presence of God, you're gonna be as open to that world as you are to the physical world.

Now, the point is, in a situation like this, and Paul had many such visions and revelations - 2 Corinthians 12 tells about 'em. Remember the time he was taken even to the third heaven and couldn't speak about the things he saw? So, at this point, Paul is lifted up to experience and to see and understand a dimension that is beyond the natural so it's in ecstasy; and what happens? He sees the Lord, and the Lord speaks. Verse 18, "Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me." Now, the Lord says, "You gotta get outta Jerusalem, Paul." He's just arrived after three years in Arabia and, you know, the word is out, boy, that Christians are scared of this guy. They...Christians, first of all, hear that Paul has arrived, and they get panicky, because they think...Paul claims to be a Christian. They think it's some kind of a new ploy, so he can sneak in on the Christians and get 'em, and so the Christians don't want anything to do with him. Finally, Barnabas says, "Calm down, people. He's our brother." Puts his arm around Paul, drags him into the Christians' meeting, and they're all going, "Uhhhhh," you know, sort of shaky and, "It's nice to know you, Mr. Paul, hmmm," you know, and that's about it; but it doesn't get really very, very gregarious in terms of affection.

But worse than that, Paul...and it's in chapter 9 of Acts, when he comes to Jerusalem, he just...when he starts preaching, he just alienates all the Jews in town; and so, finally, the apostles hustle him down to Caesarea and get him out. "Go, Paul, please. You really cause problems for us." But you know what? It took a while. In fact, he stayed in Jerusalem 15 days. He was there praying, and the Lord said, "Get out." He didn't go till 15 days later, and the whole time he's there created havoc. You know why he didn't go? He didn't think he should. He argued with God. You ever done that?

Look what it says, verse 19. "And I said, 'Lord, I got a few things to say. They know that I imprisoned and beat into every synagogue those that believed on Thee. And when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I stood by and consented unto his death and kept the raiment of them that slew him.'" He says, "Lord, you know, I got an idea. I think I'd be the best guy to reach these people. You know why? Because they know what I used to be, and they could see the fantastic transformation. They know I was totally anti-Christian; and now, when I come in and start presenting Christ, they're gonna say, "Only God could make a transformation like that. His gospel must be true."

You know something? Paul's wrong. Dead, flat wrong. The Lord says to him, "No, Paul, they will not receive your testimony." Verse 18, "They will not." You say, "But those circumstances look so good. Boy, I was such a persecutor. I was there when Stephen was stoned," Acts 7:54 and following, "I mean they're gonna know that some fantastic transformation - I'm just the guy suited to reach the Jews." God says, "Get outta town. They won't listen to you." You say, "Well, why wouldn't they?" Well, it's obvious, folks. If they wouldn't listen to Jesus after he performed miracle after miracle after miracle right in front of their faces, they're not about to listen to this guy. But Paul thought he had the circumstances on his side.

I've learned one good thing. Remember this. Circumstances are not a good way to tell God's will. They're not, 'cause you can only see the ones that are right in front of your nose. You can't see the next ones. God knows better. That's why I say, and that's why I wrote the little book on the will of God, circumstances isn't a part of it; because you cannot read the future. You cannot really see the circumstances. What looks to you good on the surface may not be good. That's why there's gotta be other monitors for the will of God than just what appears to you to be the best way to go; and, man, when Paul arrived in town, he was wrong. Everything went wrong. He finally had to get outta there to save his neck. Don't always bank on circumstances. God uses circumstance, of course, but that's not a good monitor always on the will of God.

So the Lord then says to him, "Depart, for I'll send thee far from here unto the Gentiles." This is God's calling, not Paul's choosing. Now, they hated Paul for several reasons. One of those reasons was 'cause he preached to the Gentiles. So you know what Paul says here? "If you wanna be mad at somebody for my ministry to the Gentiles, you know who you're gonna have to be mad at? God." So Paul says, "Look, people, you can't accuse me of being anti-Semitic. I was raised a Jew. I followed all the patterns. You can't accuse me of going after Christianity myself and diving in and accepting it. God did it to me, flat out. It was against my will at the very moment that it happened on the road to Damascus. If you don't like the fact that I'm a missionary to the Gentiles, you're gonna have to talk to God, because He's the one that did that to me; and, even that, I argued against."

Now what has he said in effect? He said, "You can't blame me for one thing. Here I stand. I am what I am by the grace of God. If you don't like it, ask Him. He did it." Fantastic testimony. An unbelievably beautiful and confounding defense, which puts all of the pressure on them to make a judgment about God, the God they claim to love and worship. Powerful. Powerful. "If you don't like what I am, don't tell me about it. It's the work of God." Well, when he said the word Gentiles, it sprung the little trap in their brains and released all their prejudice. They hated the Gentiles, and the thing that griped them most about Paul's ministry was he was going around preaching equality. The Jew and Gentile as one in Christ, and they didn't have to become Jews. They didn't have to get circumcised. Didn't have to keep the law, and this infuriated them. So all he had to do was say the word Gentiles, and that brings us to point four, the action of the people...

This tripped the hammer, and everything broke loose, and they listened to him until this word. When he said, "God sent me to the Gentiles to preach what I preach," that blew their lids; and they lifted up their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth. It is not fit that he should live. This kind of pollution doesn't belong in the world. Get him out." All logic, all sense, all reason, all doctrine, all everything was consumed in the flames of prejudice. The fury broke loose.

Now, they weren't angry because he made proselytes. They made proselytes. They were angry because he offered equality to the Gentiles apart from Judaism. They couldn't tolerate it. They

couldn't stand it. Verse 23, you know what they did? "They cried out and cast off their clothes and threw dirt in the air." Say, "That musta been a funny scene." Well, they started throwing their clothes. Some people would say, "Well, that was just fury, and they were throwing dirt and throwing," you know, like they were mad. No, I...I don't think so. I think they had a very specific purpose. You say, "What do you mean?" Well, you know, I was reading about casting off their clothes, and my mind went back to verse 20, and it says that when Stephen was stoned, Paul kept the raiment of them that slew him.

You know, whenever they stoned somebody, apparently they took off their outer garment so they could really let the rocks fly; and I think what they were gonna do was stone Paul; and since he was clear up at the top of the stairs, it was a long shot...and they started throwing off their outer garments, you see, but they threw dirt. You know why they threw dirt? There weren't any rocks. They grabbed whatever there was. Dirt clods instead of stones. I think they were gonna stone him. They were so infuriated. They were in a frenzy, and they began to grab dirt and throw dirt and threw their clothes off so they could throw it far enough to hit him.

What a scene. Can you see how totally stupid and totally irrational they are? All of the logic of Paul's presentation means nothing. All he does is mention the word Gentiles, and they go nuts. That's religious prejudice...Paul gave his defense, and when they rejected it, you know who they really rejected? Who did they reject? God, that's who; and if that doesn't confirm the unbelief of Israel at that point, nothing does.

Now the last feature. We close with this one. The attitude of Paul, and here come to the thing that I wanted to major on. The attitude of Paul. In the midst of all of this, with everybody throwing dirt at him and the Romans chained him up and all this going on, what's his attitude? Well, I'll tell ya. Just give you a little preview. You know what his attitude is? Love, love for everybody. Love for the Jews throwing the dirt. Love for the Romans standing there guarding him, because that's the measure of the man. He loved. That was his character. All the flying clothes and dirt clods and everything else presented to poor old Claudius Lysias a real problem. He had a new perplexity. "Now what do I do? I didn't even understand what the guy said. I'm no closer to the truth than I ever was. What am I gonna do now?" And so he figures like any Roman soldier, any hardened character such as that. "I know how I'll find out. I've got a way to do it. Torture."

Verse 24. "The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the barracks, and they bade that he should be examined by scourging." That's torture, the flagellum of the Romans was a horrible thing, a stick covered with leather, and then leather thongs, and at the end, bits and pieces of bones and metal, and they would just lash the back until it ripped it raw. That was the flagellum, something Paul had never experienced. Five times received from the Jews, the Jewish lashes. That was different, and three times, the Romans had beaten him with rods, and that was a bunch of sticks tied together, and then they just flailed on him with it; but he'd never had the flagellum. Jesus did before His death.

And so he says, "I'll scourge him, and that'll make him confess, and we'll find out what he's done." He figured he musta done something terrible when they started throwing all this dirt. So he brought him in to be scourged, verse 24. Verse 25, "And as they bound him with thongs," and the word bound has the implication of stretching. That's what they did. They would stretch the man's body to all extreme, so that his body would be drawn to attention, and so that all the lashes would cause the skin to separate immediately and cut right into the flesh and the muscle and tissue. And so they stretched him out, verse 25. And "Paul...I love this...said to the centurion who stood by, 'Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?'"

Yikes! Now, the scourge, if it didn't kill him would cripple him for life...Paul had never had the scourging. You know why he never had a scourging? 'Cause it was a crime to scourge a Roman. The Portion law and the Valerian Law forbid any Roman from ever going through punishment by flagellum. To add to that, Suetonius, the lawyer said, "Any Roman...who violates or any man who violates the rights of a Roman citizen will be executed of Esquiline Hill in Rome."...So, when Paul said, "Is it lawful to do this to a Roman, uncondemned?" panic struck. Now you know what's interesting in this? You see Paul's attitude. You've already seen his attitude toward the Jews. Even though they hated him and despised him, he loved them and did everything he could to conciliate them, didn't he? He didn't say one thing in that whole speech to really alienate them. Everything he said was gentle and loving and winsome. Even though they hated him. Even though they had beaten him, and, as he even stood there and spoke, his face was puffed and black and blue and bruised and blood was on his clothes from the beating he'd had before the Romans got to him. But with all of that, he was loving and kind and gentle and never a harsh word to them. He loved them.

And here with these Romans, he doesn't burst out in any kind of invectives. It's just the gentle question that he offers very patiently...and I think that indicates his attitude toward them. You know why? Paul could've accepted the punishment. You say, "You gotta be kidding. Nobody'd do that." Wait a minute. You don't know Paul. Paul said that every mark he had on his body was a mark of Jesus Christ, didn't he? Galatians 6:10. Romans 8, he said, "The sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be ours hereafter." Colossians 1, he said, "I fill up in my body the afflictions of Christ." Philippians 2, he said, "If I have to suffer on the sacrifice of your joy, I...I rejoice." In other words, suffering, to Paul was a glory. It was a joy, and you know, he could've just taken all those blows all over him, and...and then he coulda said, "You see all those scars? I have received those for Christ. Oh, what a joy it was." And maybe he could've said, "You see what I've suffered," and maybe gotten a little self-glory out of it...

Paul, seemingly, had the ability to take all kinds of pain and to have joy in the middle of it, didn't he? Remember the stocks in Philippi? Those aren't stocks like you think of. Those are stocks with graded, graduated holes, extending all the way out; and the man, according to the length of his legs, was stretched to the extremity, and his legs were locked in at their furthest, extreme stretch. In the midst

of that, what was he doing? Singing. Singing songs. Now, he had an ability to tolerate pain in the midst of persecution that's unreal. He probably coulda said, "Well, the Spirit'll sustain me. Go ahead, hit away; and if I die, to die is...gain." We sang it this morning, didn't we?

You say, "Why didn't he do it?" 'Cause he didn't have a martyr complex. He didn't have some kind of a self-glorification problem where he wanted to go around and show off his scars. That brings me to a good principle, another principle. In witnessing in a situation, don't be a martyr. Don't just put yourself in a situation to suffer pain so you can go away and say to everybody, "Ohhhhh, I've suffered for the Lord." Don't look for self-glory or self-pity...Don't enjoy your suffering. No place for Christian masochists.

But, you know, there's a second reason he didn't let 'em do this to him. The first one is because he didn't have a martyr complex. He didn't have self-glory. The second one is this: He saved the life of that Roman. He could've accepted the pain and gone to be with Jesus, which is what he wanted to do anyway. Or at least he could've accepted the pain and had the scars to show his faithfulness. But, no, he didn't do that, because, had he done that, he could've had the life of that soldier; because, you see, if the soldier had done that, he could've paid with his life. So when Paul said, "I'm a Roman citizen," in effect, he saved the man's life.

Verse 26, "When the centurion...that's the captain of a hundred men...heard that, he went and told the chief captain...that's the captain of a thousand men, the chief commander, Claudius Lysias...He said, 'Take heed what you do. This man is a Roman.'" Boy, when the news got there, panic. "The chief captain came and said unto him, 'Tell me, are you a Roman?' He said, 'Yes.'" Do you see how God had equipped Paul for every trial?...

You know, that reminds me of 1 Corinthians 10. When Paul said it, he knew what he was talking about. "God will never allow you to suffer above that you are able, but will, with every trial or temptation, make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it." God fits every man for everything He takes him through. "Said, 'Yes,' and the chief captain answered, 'Hooooo, with a great sum obtained I this freedom.'" He said, "Man, I bought my Roman citizenship. It means a lot to me. You realize what I almost did? Almost lost my citizenship or my life." Paul quietly says, "It's interesting. I was free born." Which just drives the nails in a little deeper. He wasn't a second-class citizen. He was a first-class citizen. Here was a second-class citizen gonna...gonna flagellate a first-class citizen. Bad news. The first guy was on thin ice anyway.

You say, "How did he get his citizenship?" He bought it. Say, "Who'd he buy it from?" Probably under the rule of Emperor Claudius, because his name is Lysias, a Greek name. He's a Greek guy. Where did he get the Roman name Claudius? Well, people used to take the name of the emperor, so he probably took Claudius' name, because, during the reign of Claudius, Claudius had a wife named Messalina, and Messalina had a buncha court favorites that hung around her, and they all thought



they'd line their own pockets, so they started selling Roman citizenships for exorbitant prices; and what happened was Claudius Lysias bought one of them. Took the name of Claudius, so he was a purchased citizen in that sense. Paul was born a citizen.

You say, "That's interesting. How did Paul's father become a citizen?" We don't know, but God made sure it happened. Well, "Then immediately...verse 29...they departed from him who should have examined him." Everybody left. "The chief captain was afraid after he knew that he was a Roman, because he had bound him." He was scared. Chief captain said, "Everybody out. It's all over with."

"And the next day, they turned him over to the Jews for due process." Now lemme show you something, as we conclude with this thought. What do we see here about giving a positive testimony in a negative situation? Next time, we're gonna pick it up and see what happened in phase two of his defense, his second defense. But what do we see here about a positive testimony in a negative situation? One, you have to accept the situation is from God. Two, create an opportunity. Three, do everything to win your hearers. Four, exalt the Lord, so that if people reject, they're rejecting God, not you. Five, use everything to avoid suffering. Six, have the right attitude; and the only right attitude is love.

How many times have you been in a situation where you had an opportunity to witness, and your only attitude was self-preservation? Protecting your ego, safety, security, popularity....What was Paul's attitude? Selfless love for those around him. He did everything to win their hearts. To the Jews, he was everything that he could've been to win them. Say, "That was a gimmick. Ahhhhh, that was a gimmick to get their attention." No, it wasn't a gimmick. You know he loved those Jews? You read Romans 9, 10, and 11 again, if you don't think he loved 'em. He says in Romans, "I could wish myself accursed... chapter 3...for the sake of Israel's salvation." He says, "My heart's prayer and desire for Israel is they be saved," in chapter 10. There was a passion in his bones. No, he really loved 'em, and he loved the Gentiles enough to spare that man's life.

You know, Jesus was the same way, dying on the cross, He looked out to the people who spit on Him, and He said, "Father... what?...forgive them for they know not what they do." Stephen, as he crushed beneath the bloody stones and the blood ran away and the life with it, looked up and said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." That's the only attitude that'll ever make you effective in a negative situation, when you love the people so much you're willing to sacrifice everything you have for their sake. Your ego, your popularity, everything. That's to be your attitude. Beloved, when all these things fall into line, you'll have a positive testimony in a negative situation that God'll bless. Let's pray.

It's good, Father, this morning to share in the Word. It's rich. It's full, and we feel satisfied. We thank You for it. Father, as satisfied as we are, we're unsatisfied in the sense that there are many yet who do not know our Lord Jesus Christ, and our hearts grieve for them. Maybe some this morning here.

And in addition, Lord, there are Christians, Your own children, who should be giving this kind of testimony, but are not out of selfishness. Oh, God, we pray that they might really know what the love of God is that shed abroad in their hearts, and that they might be able to transmit it to others as the Spirit flows through. Pray that we might make a dent in this world. That we, from this church, just us, to begin with, Lord, would go out of this place in this week, give a positive testimony. Father, what Your Spirit could do. How exciting it is to think about. God, help us to be faithful. We give You the praise in Jesus' name. Amen.

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