

A Practical Study of ACTS:

Take It To Them!

“Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

Study Number Eighteen – Acts 22:1-30

Ron Lee Davis in his book *Gold in the Making* sites the following illustration:

(Gold in the Making: Where is God When Bad Things Happen to You by Ron Lee Davis)

The Jaeger family’s cabin cruiser rose and fell on the surface of the Atlantic Ocean. It had been a good day of deep-sea fishing for George Jaeger, his three sons, and his father. Despite the strong, brisk breeze and the gathering clouds, the day had been mild and the sea friendly, yielding a good catch.

Toward evening, however, the wind grew stronger, and the sea rose ominously. George Jaeger knew how to read the warning signs of the sea. With respect for the power of the elements, but without fear, he nosed his small craft toward home. Suddenly, the boat’s engine sputtered, died, and refused to start.

The storm grew angrier. The sky darkened, and the waves rose to heights of ten feet and more, pounding over the sides and swamping the boat. A relaxing fishing trip had rapidly become a thing of horror.

George Jaeger calmly, efficiently, tied a rope through the laces of the lifejackets, tying himself, his father, and his sons together. As their small boat broke apart and sank beneath the crashing waves, the Jaeger men and boys bravely committed themselves to the Atlantic Ocean.

Together they struggled, straining to stay alive, but losing strength and hope. First one son, then a second, then a third drowned. Finally Grandpa Jaeger, weary from the struggle and choking on the sea water, gave up the fight and disappeared beneath the waves.

Eight hours later, George Jaeger staggered ashore alone, pulling the rope which still attached to his three sons and his father, all dead.

Months after surviving this horror at sea, George Jaeger was able to say, “My youngest son Cliff was the first to go. I had always taught our children not to fear death, because it meant being with Christ. Cliff was a little boy, and he fought and fought the waves. The last thing he said to me was, ‘Dad, I’d rather be with Jesus than to go on fighting anymore.’ He died quietly with courage and dignity” (quoted in *The Effective Father* by Gordon MacDonald).

[I ask you the question:] How will you face your death?
(source unknown)

For the apostle Paul, when he is in a Roman jail and he pens the Philippian letter, he says:

Philippians 1:21, 23

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

I am having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.

In our last study we dealt with the subject:

Is Paul in the will of God or out of the will of God in going to Jerusalem?

The people in Tyre said don't go. And quite a large group in Caesarea said don't go. Paul's only response to them was: "Look, quit weeping and breaking my heart. I'm ready not only to be bound but to die in Jerusalem if necessary for the sake of the Gospel."

Doug Manning wrote a book called *Don't Take My Grief Away* and in it he says:

(Don't Take My Grief Away From Me: How to Walk Through Grief and Learn to Live Again by Doug Manning)

There is one test for whether or not your purpose is done.

If you are alive, it is not finished.

(source unknown)

Paul is still alive so he's not finished but he almost thought he was. Recall when he went up to the temple to fulfill his vows with four others, he was recognized by some Asian Jews that

were there for the Feast of Pentecost. And they made all kinds of railing accusations, stirred up a riot, pulled him outside the temple, shut the door and were ready to kill him.

Heading for the rock pile they were cut off by the Roman commander and his forces who came and rescued Paul, literally carrying him bodily to the barracks.

Paul, looking like a scene from Rocky II, all bloody, battered and beaten, asked the commander if he could have the privilege of addressing this mad mob. And the commander is totally confused. He doesn't understand what's going on and he can't understand a man that wants to talk to a group of people that are trying to kill him.

Let's refresh our minds by reading just a few verses from Acts 21 and then we'll pick up in our study.

Acts 21:35-40

And when he got to the stairs, it so happened that he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; for the multitude of the people kept following behind crying out, "Away with him!" And as Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek? Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to

“speak to the people.” And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,

The apostle can turn to the Roman commander and speak in Greek and then he can turn and begin to speak to his beloved people in the Hebrew dialect of Aramaic. And he’s ready now to speak.

There are a couple of principles involved in our lives. We know what it says at the health studio: “There is no gain without pain.”

Well, as far as God is concerned, there are pains when God trains. We can count on it.

If we’re going through difficult circumstances in our life and we’re a believer, don’t be looking for some sin or for something we’ve done thinking God is trying to get even. A lot of people make that big mistake. God is only pruning and preparing us for a fruitful experience in the lives of other people.

There’s a great book written by Eugene H. Peterson called *Run With the Horses: The Quest for Life at Its Best* and he says:

(Run With the Horses: The Quest for Life at Its Best by Eugene H. Peterson)

Now at the first sign of difficulty you are ready to quit, if you are fatigued by this run-of-the-mill crowd of apathetic mediocrities, what will you do when the real race starts? The race with the swift and determined horses of excellence? What is it you really want, Jeremiah? Do you want to shuffle along with this crowd or [do you want to] run with the horses?
(source unknown)

Paul is a champion. Paul is not going to be intimidated by this crowd. He's going to take his opportunity to address the nation. And many of these people here are leaders in the Sanhedrin. There are Pharisees and Sadducees in the group. And he considers it a great opportunity to share the Gospel with them.

So get a picture of him in mind with his hair disheveled, his robe torn. He probably has his belt in his hand, which reminds him of what Agabus did in tying his feet and hands with it. And like Martin Luther, he's kind of saying under his breath, "Here I stand, God help me."

And now swollen and beaten, he's ready to speak—verse 1.

v. 1 "Men, brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I am now offering to you."

"Men, brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I am now offering to you."

v. 2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they provided him all the more with silence; and he is saying,

“And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they provided him all the more with silence; and he is saying,”

Isn't that interesting? As soon as they hear Aramaic, there is just dead silence. And the apostle speaks from the stairs so everybody can hear.

We can see the stairs kind of lined with the Roman soldiers and the commander. He can't understand what's going on and probably doesn't know too much Aramaic, and wondering who in the world this man is who wants to talk to these people who hate him so much.

Notice verse 3 is a critical verse.

v. 3 “I am a man who is a Jew, having been born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but having been brought up in this city, having been educated at the feet of Gamaliel, strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as you all are today.

“I am a man who is a Jew, having been born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but having been brought up in this city, having been educated at the feet of Gamaliel, strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as you all are today.”

What's he doing in that verse? He's doing what a lot of us fail to do when we share our witness for Jesus Christ. We call it **BUILDING BRIDGES**. It's developing a rapport that we might share Christ.

It's great sharing Christ with the unsaved. But too many times our technique is really wanting. We clobber them with the Gospel without first showing them that we love them and we care.

People really do not care how much we know until they really know how much we care. And when we begin to demonstrate that, we build a bridge.

Paul knows that if he's going to get a message across to them, he has to tell them, "Look, I'm like you. Look, I've had some of the same experiences. Please understand I'm a home-grown boy. Most of my life was spent right here in this city of Jerusalem."

So he gives the statistics:

"[I was] born in Tarsus of Cilicia"—about 250 miles north of here—"but [I was] brought up in this city, [and I was] educated at the feet of Gamaliel"—and boy the guys on the Sanhedrin know this fella. He has been a prominent leader in the city and they're fully aware of what it meant to be educated by him.

“strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as you all are today.”

In the book of Galatians he says:

Galatians 1:13, 14

You have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

“I was eager and desirous to be first among my own people.”

In Philippians 3:4-7 he describes the same thing.

It’s “according”—“strictly according to our ancestral law, [I was] zealous for God.”

And then we have to accept the fact that he’s a southerner. We just can’t say “just as you all are today” without being fully aware that he’s from southern Palestine sometime or another.

He’s building a bridge, isn’t he? He’s trying to help them see that he is like them.

It’s interesting how Chuck Yeager, in his autobiography identifies with the Air Force:

(Yeager, An Autobiography by Chuck Yeager)

The person I am is the sum-total of the life I've lived. So, I have very deep emotions about the blue Air Force uniform that I wore most of my adult life. The Air Force molded and trained me, and who I am and whatever I've accomplished, I owe to them. They taught me everything I needed to know to do my job. There is no such thing as a natural-born pilot.
(source unknown)

He's saying, "This is what I am."

Paul says:

"I was educated here, this is what I did."

Now he's going on with his testimony—verse 4.

v. 4 I who persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,

"I who persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,"

See he refers to Christianity as the "Way" because that's the title they use when they refer to this Christian message. It's the "Way."

In Acts 9 he speaks of it in the same way, referring to "the Way." He was going to go to Damascus to get people who were

of “the Way.” (ref. Acts 9:1, 2)

v. 5 as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders are bearing witness for me. From whom also having received letters to the brethren, I was journeying to Damascus for the purpose of bringing even those who were there having been bound to Jerusalem in order that they might be punished.

“as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders are bearing witness for me.”

And he looks out in the audience. There are some of the elders and the high priests that were alive, serving on the Sanhedrin when he was there. And it’s just like he looks right at them to get them to shake their heads. Yes, he’s telling the truth.

“From whom also having received letters to the brethren, I was journeying to Damascus for the purpose of bringing even those who were there having been bound to Jerusalem in order that they might be punished.”

“I mean I was no local yokel when it came to persecution. I was willing to travel 130 miles north to Damascus to scare up some of these people and bring them back here bound to Jerusalem to see to it that we stamped out this Christian message before it got spread too far.”

v. 6 And it came about that as I was proceeding on my journey and nearing Damascus, about noon,

suddenly out from heaven there flashed a very bright light all around me.

“And it came about that as I was proceeding on my journey and nearing Damascus, about noon, suddenly out from heaven there flashed a very bright light about me.”

Now what’s he done? He’s built a bridge, he’s disarmed them, prepared them for what he’s getting ready to say. And the big question that’s on their mind, now that he’s said all these things is: “Hey, what makes you like you are today?”

In other words, what brought about the change in your life? And they’re ready for it! And he is too. And so he wants to tell them about this trip to Damascus.

He’d been on the road about six days and on the sixth day, “about noon,” as they’re traveling along there was a great “bright light” that flashed “all around me.”

v. 7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me: ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’

“And I fell to the ground and I heard a voice saying to me: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”“

Now ever asked the question why the Lord said that to Paul?—“why are you persecuting me?”—when He’s up in heaven and He’s already died and suffered and He’s glorified?

Listen friend, if we're all alone and we're really hurting and we don't think anybody cares, this verse tells us that there is somebody that cares. When we hurt, if we're His child, He hurts.

He is being persecuted by the fact that His children are being hurt while they're still down here on earth.

Does Jesus care? Yes He does!

And when we hurt, He hurts. When we have tears in our eyes He's got tears in His eyes. Just talk to Mary and Martha about that. He does feel the hurt and the pain that we go through in the process of spiritual growth and our ultimate demise to go be with Him.

v. 8 And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus, the one from Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

“And I answered, “Who are you, Lord?” And He said to me, “I am Jesus, the one from Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.””

Now what happened in the audience down at the bottom of the stairs? As soon as Jesus of Nazareth was mentioned there was probably some rumbling in the crowd—just a little. And several of those fellas that were in the Sanhedrin, their heads just kind of bobbed down a tad bit because they realized they were guilty 29 years ago when they sat on that Sanhedrin,

when they voted to crucify Jesus Christ. And now Jesus Christ is brought into his testimony.

See how long he has come before he's even mentioned that word? He's been wise. He's prepared them for it. And now he's just telling them the truth. He's got all ears. They're listening

And this voice said, "I am Jesus, the one from Nazareth, whom you are persecuting."

v. 9 And those who were with me beheld the light, to be sure, but did not hear [with comprehension] the voice of the One who was speaking to me.

"And those who were with me beheld the light, to be sure, but did not hear [with comprehension] the voice of the One who was speaking to me."

Did that happen to somebody else?

In Acts 7, remember, when Stephen was speaking before the Sanhedrin he saw heaven open and he saw the Son of God standing on the right hand but nobody else saw that. (ref. Acts 7:55, 56)

So Paul's basically saying the same thing. He said, "I heard this voice and it spoke. And the rest of them heard a noise but they did not comprehend what was being said."

He's honest. They did see the light and they saw the results of

the light, of course, and what happened?

v. 10 And I said: ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Having arisen, be going on your way into Damascus; and there it shall be told you concerning all things which have been appointed for you to do.

“And I said: “What shall I do, Lord?””

Notice it’s kind of centered around questions.

In verse 8 it’s, “Who are you, Lord?”

And in verse 10, “What shall I do, Lord?”

“And the Lord said to me, “Having arisen, be going on your way into Damascus; and there it shall be told you concerning all things which have been appointed for you to do.”

“Paul, you can sit right here out of My will if you want to and stew in self-pity over the fact that you’re blind or you can go to Jerusalem and there you will find out what you need to know.”

Remember when Elijah came out of the palace with Ahab and Jezebel and the Lord says, “Go down to the brook Cherith and I’m going to send the ravens there in the morning and in the evening. And I’m going to provide for you”—WHERE?—“there.” (ref. 1 Kings 17:2-4)

Then the brook dried up and the Lord said, “I want you to go to Zeraphath. There’s a widow lady. I’m going to provide for you there.” (see 1 Kings 17:7-16)

We always want to be sure in our Christian life that we’re “THERE” because we’ll always meet up with God’s provision for our needs. When we’re HERE and we ought to be “THERE,” we’re going to miss His provision. So we want to be careful as a believer that we find ourselves in the center of the will of God. We’re there and we need to be there and we’re not here.

Like Elijah, remember when he went to the cave? Finally the Lord says, “Why are you here? You need to be there! Get back in there and lead the revival now that the priests of Baal have been killed and everything is ready. Why are you here?” (see 1 Kings 9:9-18)

v. 11 But since I was not seeing for the glory of that light, I was being led by the hand by those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

“But since I was not seeing for the glory of that light, I was being led by the hand by those who were with me, I came into Damascus.”

Now notice how sensitive this man is. There are some changes between Acts 9 and Acts 22. Listen to verse 12.

v. 12 And a certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, being well spoken of by all the Jews who were living there,

“And a certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, being well spoken of by all the Jews who were living there,”

In Acts 9 Luke describes Ananias as being one of the men of “the Way.” Now would that get these fellas upset? It would get them upset.

So when we’re wise as a serpent and we’re harmless as a dove we’re coming across with the credentials of this man that will fit into the testimony we’re giving to a bunch of Jews standing down at the bottom of the stairs who are ready to take our life.

See how wise he is? As witnesses for Jesus Christ, PLAN our strategy and PRAY for our prospect and BE CAREFUL in how we relate to them! Understand how we build a bridge before we clobber them so we can know the joy of seeing fruit borne through our life in the lives of others.

So he knows that would turn them off. So who is Ananias? Well he also is “a man who was very devout among the standards of the Law,” because he was a Jew. And he was “well spoken of by all the Jews who were living there.” So he uses this here because of who he’s speaking to.

v. 13 having come to me and standing near said to me, **‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’** And at that very hour I looked up at him.

“having come to me and standing near said to me, “Brother Saul, receive your sight!” And at that very hour I looked up at him.”

There was a miracle! I regained my sight from him!

v. 14 And he said: **‘The God of our fathers appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One, and to hear the voice of His mouth.**

“And he said: “The God of our fathers appointed you”—for **THREE THINGS.**

Look at those three things. We wish this could be true for us? And it can be.

1. “to know His will and”
2. “to see the Righteous One”—Jesus,
3. “and to hear the voice of His mouth.”

Now he’s going to “know His will,” he’s seen “the Righteous One,” and he is one who is going “to hear [the words from] His mouth.”

REASON—verse 15.

v. 15 For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.

“For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.”

Now why didn't he just say, “you'll be a witness to the Gentiles”?

He would have lost it right there!

Why didn't he say, “You'll just be a witness to the Jews”? Because that isn't true.

In order to get across the rest of the message, we use a neutral term. And his neutral term is, “I'm going to be a witness—He told me I was going to be a witness to all men.”

v. 16 And now why are you delaying? Having arisen, be baptized and wash away your sins, having called on His name.'

“And now why are you delaying? Having arisen, be baptized and wash away your sins, having called on His name.””

Now there are THREE QUESTIONS:

1. verse 8—“Who are you, Lord?”

2. verse 10—“What shall I do?”

And now:

3. verse 16—“Why are you delaying?”

“Why are you waiting?”

2 Corinthians 6:1, 2

...Behold now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation...

Don't wait any longer! He's the one who wants us to come now.

And so he's saying to them: “why are you delaying?” Do it now!

This reminded us of Acts 1. As Jesus ascended into heaven the angelic messenger said:

Acts 1:11

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up in the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

And then Jesus had to say to them while He was on the earth to His disciples:

John 4:35, 36

“Don’t say, ‘There are four months, and then comes the harvest.’ Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, they’re white already to harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal, that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.”

“why are you delaying?”

Just get on with it!

v. 17 And it came about that after I returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance,

“And it came about that after I returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance,”

Now we have a problem here. This is not recorded in any of Paul’s epistles, okay? So we have to fit this into the framework of what happens after he becomes a Christian in Damascus. So we have to chase through the epistles a little bit to fill in the gaps here.

Galatians 1:15-18 is going to help us so let’s land on that for just a second:

Galatians 1:15-18

But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but [now here comes the clue] I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, [or Peter] and stayed with him fifteen days.

So for a period of 3+ years he was in Arabia being taught by the Spirit of God the concepts of the church, the body of Christ. He comes back to Damascus and he feels it's a good thing to go see Peter in Jerusalem for a two week retreat. It's while he's in Jerusalem, after this he's three-years-old in the Lord, he has this experience that's described here.

“I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance,”

v. 18 and I saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’

“and I saw Him”—JESUS—“saying to me, “Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.””

So first he says, “I saw the Lord on the road in the great light. Then after my three year experience, and I came to

Jerusalem. I fell into a trance, and I saw Him in the temple.” He says, “Get out of here quickly, they will not receive this message.”

Now how does Paul respond to that in his early walk with God? Like a lot of us do. We express resistance.

Paul probably used the THREE Q’s here:

1. QUICKLY Lord? “Aren’t You overreacting just a little bit?”
2. QUALIFICATIONS? “Lord, look at my background! These guys are just like me. I’m perfectly qualified to minister to them now that I know Messiah in a personal way.”

And then:

3. QUESTIONS—“Are You sure? Is this what You really want?”

Notice verse 19.

v. 19 And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves are knowing that in one synagogue after another I was imprisoning and beating those who were believing in you.

“And I said, “Lord, they themselves are knowing that in one synagogue after another I was imprisoning and beating those

who were believing in you.”

Now it’s interesting, in Acts 9 when Ananias is told to go down to the street called straight and call on one Saul of Tarsus, he resisted it too. He was scared to death. Listen to what he says in verses 13 and 14:

Acts 9:13, 14

Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard by many about this man, how much harm he did to Thy saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priest to bind all who call upon Thy name.”

Isn’t that funny? When there’s kind of a crisis in our life and we really can’t quite understand the Lord’s will, we think we’re giving Him information He doesn’t already know.

“I have heard by many about this man! Lord, have You heard about him too? I want to be sure You know because if You want me to call on that guy, I guess You better get my mansion ready because I’m coming to the house! He’s got quite a track record with them, You know? Get mine right next to Stephen’s.”

v. 20 And when the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the cloaks of those who were slaying him.’

“And when the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the cloaks of those who were slaying him.””

This is all that he’s telling the Lord here about why he’s qualified to stay in Jerusalem and be a witness there. And he weaves that into his testimony so they’ll also remember what happened when the Sanhedrin took Stephen out and stoned him and how they put their coats down at his feet. He never forgot that.

v. 21 And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

“And He said to me,”—This is the Lord now, speaking back. And this is the end, by the way, of Paul’s message on the stairs. And there’s a reason for it.

“And He said to me, “Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.”””

Isn’t that great? The Lord is totally unmoved by his logic and his qualifications and everything else. He just restates the command.

“I know what I’m doing! Get on with it!”

“Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.”

Remember in John 20:21 when Jesus says he sees the

disciples in His resurrected body:

John 20:21

He says, “Peace be unto you. As the Father has sent Me, even so send I you.”

One of the great missionary hymns is written by Margaret Clarkson. It’s centered around that phrase, “So send I you.”

So send I you to labor unrewarded,
To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown,
To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing,
So send I you to toil for Me alone.

So send I you to bind the bruised and broken,
O’er wandering souls to work, to weep, to wake,
To bear the burdens of the world a-weary,
So send I you to suffer for My sake.

So send I you to loneliness and longing,
With heart a hungering for the loved and known.
Forsaking home and kindred, friend and dear one,
So send I you to know My love alone.

So send I you to leave your life’s ambition,
To die to dear desire, self-will resign.
To labor long and love where men revile you,
So send I you to lose your life in Mine.

So send I you to hearts made hard by hatred,
To eyes made blind because they will not see,
To send, though it be blood, to spend and spare not,
So send I you to taste of Calvary.”
(source unknown)

That is the end of that man’s message to these people at the bottom of the stairs. Why? It’s in verse 22.

v. 22 And they were listening to him up to this statement, and [then] they raised their voices saying: “Be taking away such a fellow from the earth, for it was not fitting that he should live.”

“And they were listening to him up to this statement, and [then] they raised their voices saying: ‘Be taking away such a fellow from the earth, for it was not fitting that he should live.’”

“They listened to him up to this word,”—that’s *logos*.

It can be translated as “word, statement, saying.” What’s the word? Gentiles.

“The God I know would never send a man away to the Gentiles!”

And they just boil with rage and anger. And the mob begins to say the very thing they said 29 years ago when the Son of God was on trial. And the same thing happened to Stephen as they

gnashed on him with their teeth.

“Away with him! Crucify him! He doesn’t deserve to continue to live!”

v. 23 And when they were crying out and throwing off their garments and throwing dust into the air,

“And when they were crying out and throwing off their garments and throwing dust into the air,”

This kind of sounds like Ruth Harms Calkin’s little poem:

(Lord, You Love to Say Yes by Ruth Harms Calkin)

Lord, I’m through!
Finished!
I obeyed Your instructions
I spoke as You directed.
Now what comes of it
Is Your responsibility:
I won’t give it another thought.”
[And she always has the Lord’s answer:]
“May I count on that, child?”
“Why do You ask, Father?”
“Child, we’ve been through this before.”
(source unknown)

This poor guy. He doesn’t understand Hebrew. And all of a sudden he’s just kind of lulled to sleep on his spear while Paul

is going on about this witness and he can't understand it. Then he's just bolted awake with this screaming of the mob and the tearing off of the coats and throwing dirt in the air! And he's saying, "What in the world did that guy say to get them so upset?" He's just so confused.

His name is Claudius Lysias. We'll meet him several times and we're just going to laugh at him every time we see him because he's just all thumbs. He just never can really figure out what makes this man tick. And he's supposed to be handling everything in Jerusalem in the army. He sure doesn't understand this guy.

We see in the next verse why?

v. 24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, having said that he should be examined by scourging in order that he might come to know the reason why they were shouting so against him.

“the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, having said that he should be examined by scourging in order that he might come to know the reason why they were shouting so against him.”

Well, thanks a lot.

Understand scourging? Know what's involved?

Jesus Christ was scourged. To say that he was to be scourged meant that he was to be taken into this chamber and there would be a lictor who would come in—like the executioner.

And the lictor was a big, brawny giant of a man. And he'd come in with a sawed-off baseball bat about so long—maybe a cut-off broom handle. And out of it would be leather thongs about 30 or 40 of them. And on the end of each one of those leather thongs was a piece of jagged lead or metal or bone or glass—whichever they wanted to make it. Then they would always take the person who's going to be scourged to the stump in the middle of the room.

The stump was probably about two feet off the floor, and the victim would be put belly down over the stump. Then his hands would be put in the locks on the floor in front and his feet would be locked in the locks behind him. So his back is completely exposed for the scourging. Many died from this. Many lost consciousness. And if any of them died, the lictor was always indemnified, protected by the Roman government because he was only carrying out his responsibility.

Many lost the ability to control their normal functions. They became totally disoriented. What a tragic thing to do.

And the commander has just had it up to here! And he's saying, "Scourge the guy and we'll find out who he really is!"

Now this is what happened to Jesus Christ—listen to this:

Matthew 27:24-26

And when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the multitude, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. See to that yourselves.” And all the people answered and said, “His blood be on us and our children.” Then he released Barabbas for them, but Jesus he scourged and delivered Him to be crucified.

v. 25 And when they stretched him out for the thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by: “Is it lawful for you to be scourging a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?”

“And when they stretched him out for the thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by: ‘Is it lawful for you to be scourging a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?’”

That’s great isn’t it? Just about the time they’re getting ready to lock his hands in the front, he leans over to the centurion who’s putting him the stocks and he says, “Hey I want to tell you something. I want to ask you a question. Remember on the stairs? You asked the commander, ‘Is it lawful? I feel awful.’ So I can talk to you.”

Now he just leans over to the fella and says:

“Is it lawful for you to be scourging a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?”

According to Roman law they never arrested a Roman, never put a Roman in chains, and never scourged a Roman.

So we can get the feeling the guy just freezes! He's in violation of Roman law by the fact that he's been chained and arrested in the first place. And now he's actually getting ready to go to the ultimate! To put him to scourging!

Why didn't he submit to scourging so he could consider this part of the suffering of Christ? Like he submitted to the beating that he took in Acts 16 at Philippi? Why didn't he just do it again?

There comes a time in life when human dignity is violated and we don't go beyond that. And Paul is not going to go a step further.

v. 26 And when the centurion heard this, having gone to the commander, brought this report, saying: “What are you about to be doing? For this man is a Roman.”

“And when the centurion heard this, having gone to the commander, brought this report, saying: ‘What are you about to be doing? This man is a Roman.’”

We can almost see the commander. He's saying, “Oh no! What next is this guy going to come out with?”

John Z. DeLorean in his book says:

(DeLorean by John Z. DeLorean)

During the two years that I made that room my headquarters [when he's speaking of his car company in Ireland] I derived great inspiration from an old Irish saying tacked on the wall: "For those who fight for it, life has a flavor the sheltered will never know."

(source unknown)

Bob Foster sent a poetic piece called:

Growing Tall

The tree that never had to fight
For sun and sky and air and light,
But stood out in the open plain,
And always got its share of rain,
Never became a forest king,
But lived and died a scrubby thing.

The man who never had to fight
To win his share of sun and sky and air and light
Never became a manly man,
But lived and died as he began.
Good timber does not grow in ease.
The stronger the wind, the tougher the trees.

THE TOUGHER THE GOIN'—THE FASTER THE GROWIN'

(source unknown)

Paul is laying there prepared to be scourged but he makes an issue out of his Roman citizenship.

v. 27 And the commander having come said to him, “Be telling me, are you a Roman?” And he was saying, “Yes.”

“And the commander having come”

We can just tell it. He’s walking down the hall and he’s saying “You’re not an Egyptian. You speak Greek. You speak Hebrew. You’re a Jew from Tarsus. I’m almost afraid to ask. As he comes:”

“Be telling me”— he leans down to Paul over the stump and he says—“are you a Roman?”

Paul just looks up, “Uh huh. Yay. I’m a Roman.”

“I thought so.”

And so to avoid the possibility of being guilty of a great violation, he asks the question and he gets the wrong answer again.

v. 28 And the commander answered, “I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money.” And Paul was saying: “But I have been born a citizen.”

“And the commander answered, ‘I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money.’ And Paul was saying: ‘But I have been born a citizen.’”

And he’s saying, “Katy bar the door! I just lost my job! Oh no! Look what I’ve done now with this guy!”

v. 29 Therefore those who were about to be examining him immediately stood off from him and the commander also became afraid when he came to know that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him in chains.

“Therefore those who were about to be examining him immediately stood off”—it’s like touching a hot griddle—“from him and the commander also became afraid when he came to know that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him in chains.”

Of course that was in violation of Roman law.

Now why’d he do all that?

There comes a time when we are about to be abused and it’s time to stand, and God honors that stand.

At the time when the Egyptian pharaoh said, “Destroy all the little babies!” The midwives said no. And God blessed the midwives.

We're living in a day that's dramatically displaying to us child abuse, wife abuse, and sexual perversions. The violations of human dignity run rampant in our sin-sick land.

Dale Evans Rogers described it so well in her book *Hear the Children Crying*:

(Hear the Children Crying: The Child Abuse Epidemic by Dale Evans Rogers with Frank S. Mead)

Every two minutes, in the United States, a child is being attacked by one or the other of its parents...The American Humane Association reports the abuse of 307,000 children in just one year—1975...the annual incidence of sexual abuse is put at from fifty to seventy-five thousand...New York City alone has thirty thousand *reported* abuse cases a year...one hundred thousand youngsters in the country are emotionally neglected...another one hundred thousand are physically, morally, and educationally neglected...at least seven hundred are killed by their parents or parent surrogates...

If the rate continues to rise as it is rising now, we can expect to find ourselves faced with a figure of a million and a half children either seriously maimed or crippled or killed *annually*.

Read it and weep!

(source unknown)

Why is that the apostle Paul stands? He's got a right. Human dignity is about to be violated! He knows he's too weak to

survive! He's just been beaten bloody by the mob and he can't take it anymore! So it's time to say no.

And God help us that many could have said no who are maimed and broken and wounded bits of humanity. Evidence of human dignity being violated.

v. 30 Now on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble, and having brought Paul down, he stood him before them.

“Now on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble, and having brought Paul down, he stood him before them.”

Do we see God's plan in this? He had a great witness on the stairs to the nation. But now, if there was ever a chance that Paul would get to speak to the Sanhedrin, he would go ten thousand miles to get this opportunity! This is the ruling body of the Jews. They are going to assemble and Paul is going to get a chance to speak to them.

This is like playing the Super Bowl. It is the biggest opportunity in his life to share with them.

Okay, here are the lessons we get out of the passage.

Lesson #1: Paul uses every opportunity to be a witness for Christ.

Lesson #2: Paul **BUILDS A BRIDGE** to his hearers so that they might **RESPECT** and **RESPOND** to his message.

And that's critical.

Lesson #3: Each of us must ask the three questions in the passage:

1. Who are you, Lord?
2. What shall I do, Lord?
3. Why are you delaying?

Letting time pass away without it being done.

Lesson #4: The Lord is unmoved by Paul's logic and reasoning.

He says, "Go! I'm sending you far away to the Gentiles!"

Lesson #5: God's great plan is to go to the Gentiles.

For Paul to carry the message to them.

Lesson #6: Human dignity was about to be violated in this passage.

Paul would not have survived that scourging so he claims his Roman citizenship to protect himself.

Lesson #7: Through all this adversity, Paul now has an opportunity to speak to the Sanhedrin.

May we chat for a minute about what has happened to two others who have come before the Sanhedrin just prior to this? Of whom the apostle Paul is fully aware and must have some of these thoughts in his mind?

In Acts 7 we read of another who came before the Sanhedrin to speak:

Acts 7:1, 2

And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes. And they came upon him, and dragged him away, and brought him before the Council. And they put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law, for we have heard him say that this Nazarene Jesus will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us." And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council, saw his face like the face of an angel; and the high priest said, "Are these things so?"

Who was sitting on that Sanhedrin? A guy who's getting ready now to speak to his contemporaries, and they decided they were going to stone Stephen. And they did after his message.

The other one didn't come out any better. Jesus Christ stood before the Sanhedrin and was led out to be crucified.

Both of them died! Died the martyr's death! For going before the Sanhedrin.

2 Timothy 4:16-18

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth. The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever.

Those tensions have to be going back and forth in Paul's mind as he sits there and he realizes now he is going to be allowed the privilege of speaking to the Sanhedrin. "What am I going to say?"

It's fitting to close with a hymn that Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote. It's a communion hymn and listen to the words:

Amidst us our Beloved stands,
And bids us view His pierced hands;
Points to His wounded feet and side,

Blest emblems of the crucified.

What food luxurious loads the board,
When at His table sits the Lord!
The wine how rich, the bread how sweet,
When Jesus deigns His guests to meet!

If now with eyes defiled and dim,
We see the signs, but see not Him,
Oh may His love the scales displace
And bid us view Him face to face.

Our former transports we recount,
When with Him in the holy mount;
These cause our souls to thirst anew,
His marr'd but lovely face to view.

Thou glorious bridegroom of our hearts,
Thy present smile a heaven imparts
Oh lift the veil, if veil there be,
Let every saint Thy glory see.
(source unknown)

Paul is fully aware that he's in the middle of the will of God. He's using these opportunities to bear a final witness to his beloved nation and people. He's done it on the stairs, now watch him as he does it before the Sanhedrin.

Father, we're so thankful for Your Word. Perhaps there's someone who's never said yes to Jesus Christ. Please speak to

them. Help them to literally answer the question, are you delaying by knowing not? That they would be ready to respond. And Father for those as believers who feel a great distance from You, help them to catch a fresh glimpse of Jesus Christ. To turn their eyes upon Jesus and look full in His wonderful face, knowing the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. Thank You for this rich part of Your Word of God that we can study together. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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A Practical Study of ACTS:

Take It To Them!

“Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

STUDY NUMBER EIGHTEEN – ACTS 22:1-30

NOTES

v. 1 “Men, brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I am now offering to you.”

v. 2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they provided him all the more with silence; and he is saying,

v. 3 “I am a man who is a Jew, having been born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but having been brought up in this city, having been educated at the feet of Gamaliel, strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as you all are today.

v. 4 I who persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,

v. 5 as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders are bearing witness for me. From whom also having received letters to the brethren, I was journeying to Damascus for the purpose of bringing even those who were there having been bound to Jerusalem in order that they might be punished.

v. 6 And it came about that as I was proceeding on my journey and nearing Damascus, about noon, suddenly out from heaven there flashed a very bright light all around me.

v. 7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me: ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’

v. 8 And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus, the one from Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’

v. 9 And those who were with me beheld the light, to be sure, but did not hear [with comprehension] the voice of the One who was speaking to me.

v. 10 And I said: ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Having arisen, be going on your way into Damascus; and there it shall be told you concerning all things which have been appointed for you to do.’

NOTES

v. 11 But since I was not seeing for the glory of that light, I was being led by the hand by those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

v. 12 And a certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, being well spoken of by all the Jews who were living there,

v. 13 having come to me and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very hour I looked up at him.

v. 14 And he said: 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One, and to hear the voice of His mouth.

v. 15 For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.

v. 16 And now why are you delaying? Having arisen, be baptized and wash away your sins, having called on His name.'

v. 17 And it came about that after I returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance,

v. 18 and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.'

v. 19 And I said, 'Lord, they themselves are knowing that in one synagogue after another I was imprisoning and beating those who were believing in you.

v. 20 And when the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the cloaks of those who were slaying him.'

v. 21 And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'

v. 22 And they were listening to him up to this statement, and [then] they raised their voices saying: "Be taking away such a fellow from the earth, for it was not fitting that he should live."

v. 23 And when they were crying out and throwing off their garments and throwing dust into the air,

v. 24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, having said that he should be examined by scourging in order that he might come to know the reason why they were shouting so against him.

v. 25 And when they stretched him out for the thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by: "Is it lawful for you to be scourging a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?"

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v. 30 Now on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble, and having brought Paul down, he stood him before them.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Acts 22:1-30 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What caused the respectful silence on the part of the crowd as Paul began to speak, according to verse 2?

3. How does Paul describe himself in verses 3-5?

4. What does Paul share with them in verses 6-11?

5. What does Ananias say to Paul in verses 14-16?

6. What does Paul say about his attitude toward Stephen, according to verse 20?

7. What did the Lord say to Paul, according to verse 21?

8. How does Paul avoid scourging, according to verse 25?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Paul uses every opportunity to be a witness for Christ. (1 Peter 3:15)

LESSON #2: Paul builds a bridge to his hearers so that they might respect and respond to his message.

LESSON #3: Each of us must ask the three questions in the passage: 1) Who are You, Lord? 2) What shall I do, Lord? and 3) Why are You delaying?

LESSON #4: The Lord is unmoved by Paul's logic and reasoning.

LESSON #5: God's great plan is to go to the Gentiles.

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