

JN. July 23, 84 AM - ✓✓✓

SERMON FROM THE CASTLE STEPS

Acts 22

Such a dramatic scene has never been before or since painted on canvas or in words as the one in this chapter painted by Luke.

A courtesy is being shown the Apostle Paul as we skip back to V. 35-40 in Chapter 21. If you slip back up the page, you discover that Paul is being taken (prisoner). And there is an (old castle) with its (winding stairs) for a background. There are a (few Roman soldiers) with their uniforms on the steps. There is an old man standing beside one of these soldiers - this happened to be Paul.

Now if you look out in the foreground, you discover a (mob of angry) people. Even extended way out into the streets.

V. 37
But (wait) the old man is asking for the courtesy to speak. He is speaking with the soldiers. And the captain is listening. And he is talking it over with the chief captain. And Paul says, "sir, may I speak just one word."

V. 38
The captain quizzes him - are you the Egyptian that stirred up a riot, some time ago in which 4,000 men were killed.

Paul said I heard of it, but I am not an Egyptian - I am a Jew. And perhaps all of this trouble can be quieted down. If I am permitted to speak one word.

So the captain said fair enough. Do not speak against the government and I will get the attention of the mob. We know that Paul wanted to tell them about

Christ. And he began to speak in the Hebrew language.

V. 4-0
Now as Paul stood on the stairway, in a fairly safe position - he made a very powerful address. The contents of which, he pointed out his Hebrew ancestry and training. Reminding them that he was of the same race. He reported his share in the persecution of the Christians. He reminded them of the fact that he had been a leader in the persecution. He related some of his experiences - especially, his conversion, and his commission. And then Paul made a reference to the Gentiles. In his address, which increased the fury of the mob. Paul's Roman citizenship saved him from a severe beating. And then he was taken on to the Sanhedrin and here again he shows his ability to handle a difficult situation. This is in a nutshell, the ground we want to cover tonight.

There are four things we use to outline this chapter. Childhood - V. 1-4, Conversion - V. 5-13, Commission - V. 14-21, Condemnation - V. 22-30.

I. CHILDHOOD - V. 1-4

In giving us a biography of his ancestry, Paul standing on the castle steps has received the courtesy from the men to make an address.

V. 1 - He calls it a defense which I now make unto you. The defense is in reference to the conduct of his life. He is talking about the charges that have been placed against him. And he will recount the well known story of his zeal.

V. 2 - Luke pictures a sudden hush that swept over the vast mob under the spell of Paul's speaking. They became very very quiet. Now Paul's defense was not really to justify himself. It was more in the form of a personal testimony - he planned to show them what great things God had done for him.

V. 3

Let me tell you about myself. V. 3. Paul said. I am one of your nation. Immediately they were interested. I was born in Tarsus - later I moved to Jerusalem. I studied under Gamaliel. I was instructed in the law. My parents were strict Hebrews. And they desired that their son should know Jewish law. That is one reason I was brought to Jerusalem - for study under the most prominent teacher of my day.

Now like all of you, he said - I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews. And Paul was naturally gifted. He was highly trained. And highly educated. Having studied under that scholar.

V. 4 - He said, I persecuted this way unto the death. He says I became a very zealous persecutor. This way refers to the way of Christians. And the way he now walked. This was the conviction of his heart. And now like all of you, I was always zealous for God. He says, we really have much in common.

So Paul gives this very brief introduction of his childhood and his development - having been sent to Jerusalem as a young boy - possibly 13 or 14 years of age. And grown up under the Rabbi there and of his personal interest in God's work.

Paul Tell His Story Again - Like John - Frenchman gets 2 laughs from a joke - once when heard, once when understands it. Englishman gets 1 laugh " " - when he hears it. American doesn't laugh at a joke - he has heard it before!
Have heard Paul's story before but it's good to hear again.

II. CONVERSION - V. 5-13

V. 5

To illustrate his point, Paul continues to talk how he championed the Jewish cause. He said, the high priest will bear me witness. That I received letters unto the brethren and I went to Damascus. To bring them which were there, bound unto Jerusalem for punishment. I lay it out, he says, even as you are doing today.

I felt with all of my heart that every Christian should be put to death, And I helped to bind many. And I caused others to be cast into prison.

I was present when Stephen was stoned. As you know from history, that these people who believed in Jesus Christ, had been crucified and raised from the dead - they were going everywhere telling about his resurrection. I went into their homes and I brought out these innocent people and I punished them.

The high priest remembers this - I got letters from him addressed from the leaders in Damascus. These letters gave me the authority to bind all of the Christians, that I could find. All of the older people will remember, beyond 25 years ago, when all of this was taking place.

I can imagine that Paul felt in his heart while he was saying these things. That if I had never gone astray - how he wished that he had never been guilty of such sin. I would think tonight that no one of you would be proud of your past sins. But Paul was telling these people.

V. 6 - I made my journey and I came right to Damascus about noon. There shone from Heaven a great light round about me. This was the last day of my trip to Damascus. I was riding at noon day. My mind was taken up with the people that I was going to be able to put in chains - when like a flash, a bright light blazed down from Heaven. Why the sun was shining. But this light was brighter

than the sun.
Bishop Taylor Smith, London - Spoke Chicago Moody Ch - (unintelligible) - By off - Hows Pine
last row not hear - close - man on last row - "I could not hear a word of your sermon
But I could not escape the shine on your face
of heralding the gospel means coming to such
a light as I saw on your face - I longed to be my
Saviour

And Paul goes on to tell what he did.

V. 7 - I fell to the ground. And I heard a voice. Saul, Saul, why persecuteth

thou me. Evidently these words pierced the mind of Paul. Why persecutest thou me?

V. 8 - Paul asked the question, who art thou, Lord? And the Lord replied, I am Jesus. The Lord Jesus identifies himself.

V. 9 - It says the friends that traveled with him were indeed fearful. They did not hear the voice but they saw the light. And they did not understand the light. But Paul knew that here was a voice speaking to him alone. The voice was out of Heaven. It was not a human voice - it was a divine voice. And that is why Paul cried out - who art thou Lord. Yes, if more people today would search in the same fashion, they could be saved.

Paul did not have to tarry for an answer. The voice replied, I am Jesus, whom thou persecuted. And when that answer came, Paul knew that he had been mistaken all along. For the first time, he realized that Jesus was the Messiah. He knew that he was not in the tomb. And that he was living in Heaven with God.

And at that point Paul cried out,

V. 10 - What shall I do Lord. And the Lord told him to arise and go to Damascus. And there it would be told him all the things which were appointed for him to do. God gave him a special revelation. Paul arose to his feet and looked around, and he couldn't see a thing because the vision of Christ had blinded him.

V. 11 - Paul was blind and had to be led into the city of Damascus.

V. 12 - Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report, lived

Our Experience of Grace - Many People seek Dramatic Experiences there. Like Paul, so they might stand up & recount I was converted as a Boy - all my life brought up love God - I have not filled any witness of Christ or presented the Church - By Grace! No other conversion like Paul his word.

V. 13 - And he came and Paul arrived. And said, brother Saul, receive thy sight. When finally Paul met Ananias, he received his sight. The years had passed and gone by, and Paul still remembered his conversion experience. It was still fresh in his mind. Do you remember when you were saved? Maybe you heard a sermon. Maybe you saw yourself as a lost sinner. You could not get the matter off of your mind and you had to settle it that day. As the hymn writer expressed it - "Oh, happy day that fixed my choice. On thee my Saviour and my God." I really don't think that you ever ought to forget that day. That day, when you were converted.

French Revolution - Somebody said to Bishop Talleyrand - The Christian Religion - what is it - it would be easy to start a Religion like that; Talleyrand: "Oh yes; one would only have to get crucified & rise again the Third Day."

III. COMMISSION - V. 14

V. 14 - Ananias said to him, the God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will.

V. 15 - For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

V. 16 - Arise and be baptized.

V. 17 - Paul says I came to the temple and had a vision. And I saw him saying, make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem. For they will not receive thy testimony concerning this.

V. 19 - And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every

synagogue them that believed on thee.

V. 20 - He mentions the blood of Stephen that was shed. I consented to it and I held his garments.

V. 21 - Paul said, I was commissioned of the Lord Jesus to preach to the Gentiles.

This is a great commission here. Paul says, I was baptized with the purpose of my life revealed. I was appointed to be a witness - now you can see brethren, that I have been changed. And I began to preach to all men. I began to go with God's redeeming message. To all men.

I wonder if there are any who are listening to me, who would say Lord, what shall I do? After the death of Cecil Rhodes, the millionaire statesman, it was found among his documents - this statement written. If there is a God, and if he cares for men, then the most important thing in the world for me is to live out what he wants me to do. And to find out what he wants me to do. And do it immediately. "Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus - but to trust and obey.

George Truitt once said, to know the will of God is the greatest knowledge. To do the will of God is the greatest achievement. And in answer to Paul's inquiry to Ananias, he said the God of our Fathers have chosen Thee - that thou should know his will and do it. The word chosen is a verb of purpose--meaning to take into one's hands (before hand). To know, to see, to hear. The result is - shall be. Thus God said, that he had taken Paul into his hands before hand from his Mother's womb and by God's grace to know the will of God to see that just one and to hear his voice that he might become a witness. Here is the

knowledge of God's will. God's will, you must understand, is nature. It is good and not bad. It is positive and not negative. It is sovereign. There are two powers in the universe - God and Satan. But the will of God is always positive. Even the Ten Commandments may appear negative, but Jesus put them in a positive way.

Matt. 5:20ff - He said you must not expend your energy in just avoiding evil, rather, that your life be filled with good so that there will be no room for evil.

God intended only good. And this is what his will is all about.

Paul got a vision of God's will - to know it perfectly by seeing Jesus. Paul had no access to a written Gospel as we do. Paul had his visions of the Lord. You remember, Jesus said - I do always those things that please him.

To know the will of God, here is one simple little thing that I read somewhere. Whatever you see Jesus doing, that is God's will for you. Jesus chose to serve rather than be served. He sought the lost. He taught the ignorant. He healed the sick. He rejected Satan's will for God's will. So our place then, is to put Jesus and his name above all names. Because every knee shall bow before Him.

Another thing Paul heard was the call of God's will. And I believe today you can hear his voice in the pages of the Bible. I also feel that you can feel his expression through your own heart. You could also find God's will by noting that lost souls are all about you. And there are human needs that cry out for help.

Even this very hour, if your heart and mind is atuned to God's will - you can hear me now because of the radio that is tuned in on this station. But if you move the dial, ever so little, you may hear everything but my voice. So it is, with your life. The sin and selfishness jam up the channels of God's voice to speak to your heart. Once a volunteer was inducted into the military. After he made that decision he said, my only question that followed was - what are my orders. And I think that is what the poet said - not to ask the reason why but to obey and if necessary, die in the line of duty.

Robert E. Lee once said duty is the sublimest word in the language. You can never do more than your duty - you should never wish to do less.

2 Tim. 2:4 - No man that wareth, intangles himself with the affairs of this life. That he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier. Paul did not ask Timothy to do what he himself had not done. By his own words, the first thing that he asked, after becoming a Christian was - what shall I do Lord. Paul's one concern was to know God's will.

This is a great tragedy - so many people today are willing to receive Jesus but they are unwilling to own him as Lord. We are long on calling people to trust the Saviour today, and short on declaring the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And this has resulted into wasted lives.

The will of God should be primary in the Christian's life. In the Lord's Prayer which we considered some couple or three months ago in sermons, Matt. 6:9-13, we discovered that one of the main petitions of that prayer - Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven. God's will is absolutely done in Heaven. And the burden is

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upon us, to carry out his will on this earth.

Maybe one reason why you ignore God's will is that you misunderstood the meaning of the freedom that you have in Christ Jesus. There are lots of people who say I am a Baptist - and no one can tell me what to do! I will do as I please. They feel that the economy of the local church - that is it means that I can have self rule.

Now anyone or anything else - each person should seek the will of God and then do what pleases Christ.

To do the will of God, you will not let sin reign in your mortal body. That you should obey it in the lust thereof.

Now God's will is not always easy - but Paul says, it is always right. Philips Brooks once said, "obedience must be the struggling desire of our life." Obedience not hard enforced, loving and spontaneous, not merely that the duty may be done. But the soul doing it may be receiving and uttering God.

If you want to make Jesus the Lord of your life, and you do not know how to begin - well, begin by thanking him for saving you. Tell Jesus that you want to serve him alone. Ask for wisdom to know and also strength to do his will. Another thing, do not wait until Jesus unfolds for you all of the future of your life. Live one moment at a time. Do the truth as you know it.

Now, God does not reveal to you in a moment all that you wish to know. But I

think all that you need to know. Thomas Carlisle said, "our grand business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies closely at hand.

And Paul discovered what the work of the Lord consists of in this commission. He was to go about and do what the Lord was doing. So, read your Gospels. See what Jesus did from day to day. And then do these things in your own life. You cannot die for a man's sins - but you can teach the word and the will of God. You can minister to people. You can give yourself in service.

Here is a choice and a commission. And who can over state the capabilities of being a Christian. Or of being a minister. I know that preaching may be a very poor thing to some people. And it may fail in its effect. The machinery is always ready for use. It needs but a hand to move it. To guide it. There are souls that are expecting, there are souls that desire and are hungry. And it ought to be for us not to disappoint them.

We might say, who is sufficient for these things. Young people of vigorous mind of ample knowledge ought to consider the ministry. And if you consider this, you will be agreeing in commission to nothing but that the demands of vigor and human care for others. And a willingness to forego ease and honor. And of course, out beyond that, is the matter of true faith in Jesus Christ and devotion to him. The life that is clean and consecrated to the indwelling of the Spirit.

V. 22 - Now Paul has given his defense. Now we come to reaction - the conformation of the mob. That when he gave the audience one word and mentioned Gentiles, they began to cry - away with such a fellow. "He has no right to be upon the earth. He is not fit to even live." Paul had said the wrong word - for the Jews hated the Gentiles. The people went wild at this point and cried away with him. And this was not the first time that such a thing happened. We remember how they cried, crucify him, crucify him.

V. 23 - They cast off their clothes - they threw dust up in the air. Let's kill Paul. He is not even fit to live. And a riot and a storm was in progress.

The Democratic Convention had just gotten under way - Noise & Waving Fists -

This was a dark situation. I remember reading about Dr. H. A. Ironsides who worked among the Indians in the West. Before the days of automobiles - they used horse drawn wagons. They had a meeting in a certain village and at 5 o'clock he started toward another village where he was to speak that night. As they journeyed, they saw a storm about to break upon them. The young preacher declared they would surely get caught in the storm. The driver said, I will try to make the rock before the storm breaks. He whipped the horses and were soon in sight of the rocks rising up about 50 ft. They drove right into a great opening in the rock. In another minute, the storm broke in all of its furry. The Indians were grateful that they had found a shelter from a storm and began to sing the song - Rock Of Ages - Cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee. Let the water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed. Be of sin the double cure. Saved from wrath and make me pure. The storm was raging. It seemed that the old preacher on the castle steps preaching the sermon would lose his life in front of the old castle.

V. 24 - The chief captain gave a command. And they brought the old preacher into the castle. And they gave an order that he be examined by scourging.

So they might find out the truth - whether this mob was right. Or whether Paul was right. This was the test - he was going to be put through.

V. 25 - As they bound Paul with thongs, Paul said to the centurion that stood by. Is it lawful to scourge a man who is Roman. Who has never been condemned. Now Paul had been bound here to the base of a pillar - his ankles were tied to rings that were set in the pavement. And his back was bear - it was convenient for the beating. He was unable to move. And the scourge was a short-handled whip of thongs. Usually with bits of metal or bone embedded in leather thongs. And after a few blows, the prisoner's back would become a mass of raw, bleeding flesh. As Paul was bound to this pillar, he dropped and raised this question. Paul knew the answer to the question. So did the centurion. So did every Roman citizen. Because scourging was reserved for (slaves) And not for Romans.

V. 26 - The centurion heard that and he went and told the chief captain. You had better be careful - this old man is a Roman citizen. And in V. 27 - the chief captain came out immediately. Tell me, art thou a Roman. And Paul said yes.

V. 28 - The chief (captain) continues to speak. He said with a great sum - I have obtained my own freedom. I bought my Roman citizenship. And the conversation went on - and Paul said, I was born free. There were three ways to get Roman citizenship. First, by birth. Second, to be awarded to you. And third, by purchasing it at a great price. So the captain had bought his. But here was a man - the apostle Paul who had been born a Roman citizen. And Paul might have added, I also have citizenship in Heaven.

Now V. 29 - The Roman captain was in a bind. He says, I don't know what we can do except hold you over, for a trial. Since we have already put you in chains.

V. 30 - The next day, the Sanhedrin was called together and Paul was given another opportunity to speak again. The situation here is suffering for righteousness sake. Paul not only saved his hide, but he perhaps saved his life. When he declared that he was a Roman citizen.

The Sanhedrin had to meet in the tower of Antonia. And they will point out to you today in Jerusalem where they think this old prison stood.

Remember this chapter reveals to us the complete consecration of the Apostle Paul to the will of God. Standing there on the old castle steps, he gave a review of his childhood days, a growing account of his conversion, a thrilling and inspiring confirmation of his commission, and then Luke concludes - with the condemnation brought against him.

Years ago in Northern Arizona a missionary doctor from a little mission section found a Navajo Indian woman forsaken in the desert. The Indian medicine man had not been able to heal her. So he told the Indians that she was possessed with an evil spirit. And that she should be taken far away in order to keep the demon from haunting the village. The Christian Doctor wrapped a blanket around her filthy body, and took her to the hospital. Upon examination he found that an operation might save her life. And she was given this one chance in 100 to live. A group of missionaries prayed while he operated. There was a long illness, and finally the news came, she was going to get well. The Indian woman said to the nurse, why did the Doctor do this for me. My people, threw me away and no one wanted me.

The Doctor is not related to me - why did he do it. She told her it was because

of the love of Christ.

She had never heard of Christ, so every day one of the missionaries came and talked with her. They had to go all the way back beyond to creation - to make her understand.

The time came when she was all well again - and when her mind was clear and bright, you understand the love of Christ now - don't you. They asked her.

Aren't you ready to turn from your old way and put all of your trust in Jesus.

She was very quiet for a moment--and then said if Jesus is anything like the Doctor, I can trust him forever. She had seen Christ magnified in a human life. And her heart was won.

In the life of Paul we see Christ. And I believe you tonight can trust Christ forever because of the example and the challenge that you have seen in this great man.

*Psa 34: 8 "Taste & see that the Lord is good"
also 55: 18 Come now let us reason together - sin, scarlet - white snow*