

GOD'S METHOD OF GRACE

ACTS 22:1-16 • TV-432B

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By

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Acts 22:1-16

“Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

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I have for you today a most interesting message. I want you to listen very carefully.

The title of this message is: **“GOD’S METHOD OF GRACE”** or I might entitle the message: **“HOW THE LORD GOD SAVES A SINNER.”**

Now, if you’d like to follow in your Bible and I certainly wish you would because I’m going to be dealing with the book of **Acts chapter 22**. And I’m really going to deal about 10 or 12 verses, looking at what the verse says and comment on what Paul says here.

Now, what he’s doing here in **Acts 22** is; these fellows, these religious fellows, had tried to have him arrested by the authorities of preaching the Gospel. And the apostle Paul in this chapter of **Acts** gives the account of his conversion.

You see, he was a very religious, very legalistic, very intellectual man, before he met Christ, before he came to know God. And he’s telling these fellows how the Lord saved him, the method of God’s grace. See what I’m saying, God’s method of grace, how the Lord saves sinners.

And here Paul is telling these fellows how God saved him. You say, “Why should I be interested in that?” I’ll tell you why, because Paul said that his conversion is a pattern, that’s right; his conversion is, *“A pattern for those who should hereafter believe.”*

In other words, the way God saved this man, the way God delivered this man, the way God called this man to faith and to Himself is the way God will save you and me and deliver us if He’s pleased to save us and not to pass us by.

So I want you to look at it carefully. So here in **verse 1 of Acts 22** Paul addresses them; *“Men, brethren, fathers, hear me. Hear the defense that I now make to you.”*

And you know; he spoke in the Hebrew tongue. And it says here; *“That when he spake to them in the Hebrew tongue, (when they heard him speak in their own native tongue, he was one of them). They didn’t realize that. “They kept the more silence.”* And then he went on.

Now here’s the first point: In **verse 3** Paul says this; *“I am a Jew. I am a man which am a Jew. I was born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia. I was brought up in that city at the feet of Gamaliel.”* There were just two major teachers in those days; Gamaliel was one of them; they were teachers of religion in their day.

And he said; “I’m a Jew and I was brought up at the feet of this religious teacher called Gamaliel. All of you are familiar with his writings and his works. And he taught me, he taught me religion. He taught me according to the perfect manner of the law of our fathers and I was zealous toward God.” Now watch this, He said really, *“As you all are this day.”*

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Now listen to me; this man didn't know the Lord. He didn't know God. He didn't know Christ, but he was a Jew. And people today; everybody's got some kind of religion. Everybody's something. "I'm a Catholic, I'm a Protestant, I'm a Jew, I'm a Baptist, I'm a Nazarene, I'm a Pentecostal, I'm a Church of Christ, I'm a Presbyterian, I'm a Quaker, and I'm this, that, and the other." Everybody's something. Everybody's got religion.

And everybody learned it from somebody. Paul said, "I'm a Jew, and I learned it from Gamaliel, the best teacher of my day." Your religion didn't originate with you. You learned it from somebody.

You were taught it from somebody either at a church, by a preacher, or by your parents, or by someone, whoever your guardians were or whoever raised you. That's the way Paul was and that's what he's saying here. "I'm a Jew and I learned the traditions and the laws and the religion of my fathers at the feet of Gamaliel."

And most people are serious in their religion; he was. He said; "I was zealous. I was a Jew. I learned my traditions and laws from the best teacher of the day and I was zealous toward God as you are, as you are."

"I was working my way to heaven. I was trying to earn salvation. I was trying to make myself accepted of God by what I did and I was serious in it." In fact, the next verse said, "*And I persecuted this way unto death.*"

"*This way*; what's he talking about, "*This way?*" I'll tell you what he's talking about; he's talking about the way of Christ. He's talking about the way of sovereign grace as opposed to human works. That's what he's talking about.

When he says "I was a zealous Jew working my way to heaven by keeping the customs and traditions of my father and I hated the way of faith, I hated the way of grace, I hated the way of mercy as opposed to human merit; I hated the way of Christ as opposed to the way of ceremony. I hated the way that gave God all the glory and left me with no glory. I hated the way of election as opposed to decision. I hated the way of Christ's righteousness and substitutionary sacrifice and precious blood as opposed to me keeping the law. I hated it and I persecuted this way to death."

Oh I hear people today say, "Well I'll worship God but I'm not going to worship a sovereign God." I hear folks say, "Well, I'll take salvation but not the way you preach it. I'll take salvation but not sovereign mercy. I'll go to heaven but not by Christ alone."

One lady wrote to Abby; I was reading Dear Abby and she said some preacher said that; "Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life and the only way a man can go to God." She said; "Well, I'll just tell you this Abbey, if that's the only way to go to heaven then I won't go. I'll be willing to go but not that way, not by the cross, not by Christ, not by the blood, not by faith, not by mercy."

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And that's what he said right here: "I hated that way." You'd be surprised how many times in the Scriptures that the way of Christ, the way of the cross, the way of grace and mercy is referred to as, "*That way.*" And that's what he's saying here; "*I persecuted that way unto death.*"

And then notice **verse 6**. And you know; he got letters from the high priest and the rulers of the synagogue to go down to Damascus to kill some more of these people that were, of that way, those believers and those grace people.

He hated them and he's going down to kill some more. I mean he said in **verse 6**; now listen, "*And it came to pass as I made my journey.*" Paul was on his journey, "*My journey.*"

He was comfortable. He was serious. He was content. It was his journey. It was the, "*Broad road that leads to destruction.*" It was the journey of darkness. It was the journey that seemed right to him; "*There's a way that seems right to a man. The end is destruction and death.*"

But he said; "I made my journey comfortable and content. I'm a Jew, I'm zealous for God, I hate the way of grace, and I'm walking my own way." Are you familiar with some of this? This is God's method of grace.

And he said, "*And suddenly, there shown from heaven a great light.*" Last week I told you if you get a revelation of God it'll come from heaven. It won't come from the earth, it'll come from heaven.

Christ said that, he said; "*I'm from above; you're from beneath. I'm from heaven; you're from the earth.*" If you hear from God you'll hear from heaven.

Now here this man, earthly religion, natural religion, enjoying his own journey, going his own way, doing his own thing, zealous toward God, and God moved. Let me tell you something; dead will stay dead till God gives life. That's right! Darkness will stay darkness until God gives light.

The Scripture says in **Genesis 1**; "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth and the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep,*" and I mean darkness, dark darkness.

Have you ever been in a cave taking a tour and the guide will say, "We're going to turn the lights out and just show you some real darkness." Have you ever done that? My friends, I have. That's darkness. You can't even see your hand up against your eyes, darkness.

And that's what was upon the face of the deep. And God said, who said; God said? The tadpoles didn't get together and decide to have light. God said, "*Let there be light.*"

And here is this religious man in his bondage and tradition and custom, in his hand-me-down religion, zealous and hating truth and hating grace and hating mercy, going on his own journey,

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going his own way, comfortable and content in his blindness, and God said, *“Let there be light; (that’s right), a light shown from heaven.”*

And you know, Paul wrote about this later in **2 Corinthians**; he said, *“God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts to give us, (to show us, to reveal to us) His glory in the face of Christ Jesus.”* He never thought it, sought it, or bought it; God did it.

I don’t know much about awakening, quickening, the conception of sinners, and the regeneration of sinners. I just know this; I know no one will move till God moves. I know that no one will come till God draws him. I know that no one will seek God till God seeks them. There’s got to be light from above, got to be.

You’ll never move toward God till God moves toward you. Christ said, *“No man can come to me, except my Father which sent me draw him.”* And this man was an object of God’s affection. This man was an object of God’s love. And this man was walking his own road and God said; *“That’s far enough, that’s far enough.”*

He’s over 40 years of age; been in religion all his life. He’d climbed the ladder of religion. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, one of the most notable, respected men of his day, intelligent but empty.

That’s the way most religion is and most religionists are, straight as a gun barrel and just as empty and dead, but dead’s going to stay dead till God speaks. Darkness will remain darkness, stumbling about till God gives light.

And he said; look at **verse 7**, and something happened when God moved; he said, *“I fell upon the ground.”*

This man was a proud man. He was leading a band of religious crusaders down into Damascus to destroy the Gospel of grace and everybody that believed it, riding a white charger with all the decorations on his saddle, leading the pack.

And here he is in the next moment lying face down, blind as a bat, in the dust. “God unhorsed him,” someone says. God spoke. God brought him down. And almighty God will always bring a man down before he raises him up.

I’m telling you that. God hates pride. *“Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before the fall. God resisteth the proud and He gives grace to the humble.”* And the proud must be humble.

The righteous must be exposed for what we are. That’s right! The wise must become a fool. You may be wise in natural things but you don’t know anything about God. “Well I think this.” *“You’re thoughts are not my thoughts, your ways are not my ways,”* God said.

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“You call bitter sweet and sweet bitter. Good bad and bad good.” Every mouth must be stopped, every heart must be broken. *“God is nigh unto them of a broken heart. He saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”*

Every good man is got to become bad. That’s right; God only saves sinners. *“He died for the ungodly.”*

Every know-it-all will know nothing. If God doesn’t strip me and humble me and crush me and break me and bring me down into the dust at His feet then, God does not intend to save me. He’ll pass me by because you go through this Bible and everybody whom God saved, everybody whom God visited in grace; He brought them down, down, down.

Old Paul said it himself; *“I’m less than the least of all the saints. I’m not worthy to be an apostle. Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I’m the chief. I’m nothing.”*

That’s not language you hear today. And the reason it’s not language you hear today is because folks are still over here in this proud zeal trying to find acceptance with God by their deeds and works. God’s never visited because when He does, He breaks the heart and humbles the spirit.

Everybody in the Old Testament who saw God; how’d they talk? Job said; *“Lord I’ve heard of you by the hearing of the ear; now mine eyes seeth thee. I hate myself. I put my hand over my mouth.”*

Isaiah said; *“I saw the Lord and I cried woe is me; I’m unclean. I’m a man of unclean lips. I’m cut off.”*

John saw the Lord on the Isle of Patmos, even this converted disciple, and he said; *“I fell at His feet as a dead man. I fell down.”*

Everybody’s inviting folks to come up to the front. What happened to Saul here is he fell down. He didn’t come up anywhere. He fell down and a voice said to me; listen, *“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”*

Now watch this; *“And I said, who art thou Lord? (who am I dealing with)?”* “Why I thought he knew God. I thought he was zealous toward God.” Everything back here was “I, I, I;” now it’s “who.” That’s a lot of difference.

“I was a Jew. I was taught. I was zealous. I persecuted this way. I made my journey. I fell to the ground.” Now it’s “Who are you?” “Who is this Lord? Who is this who holds my destiny in His hand?”

“Who is that who has all power in heaven and earth? Who is this who quickens whom He will? Who is this who has all authority over all flesh? Who are you? And He said; listen, *“I am Jesus of Nazareth. I am.”*

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There it is again. I'll be back at last Sunday's message if I'm not careful, "*I am.*" That's the first thing He said. Saul said; "*Who art thou?*" He said, "*I am. I am that I am. I am Jesus of Nazareth.*"

Now you can quit talking about what you're going to do with Jesus, Saul. Now you can talk about what you're going to quit; you can quit talking about what you're going to do with Jesus and the question is; what will He do with me? That's the question.

When God sufficiently humbles a man he'll quit bragging on what he's going to do for God and he'll start asking, "*Who art thou?*"

And here's the next question in **verse 10**; he said, "*Lord what shall I do?*"

This is God's method of grace. Everybody's got religion. Every natural man's got religion. Take a religious census sometime and you'll find out everybody's got a denominational preference, everybody's got some kind of information about religion and some thoughts about God. And most of them are pretty serious.

They all hate the way of grace and they're all walking their own way, doing their own thing. That's the big thing today, "My rights."

Then God comes along and we fall to the ground and we say, "Who art thou, who is this God with whom we have to do? Who is this God with whom we're dealing? Who art thou? I am Jesus of Nazareth."

And then comes the question; "*What will you have me do?*" How long has it been since you've heard someone cry this; "*What shall I do?*" That's what they said at Pentecost when Peter preached; "*Men and brethren what shall we do?*"

That's what the Philippian jailer said when he saw the power of God shake that jail; oh he said; "*What shall I do?*" But we preach today and some fellow says; "Well, I'd like to have a meeting with you and ask you some questions. "I," what he'd like to do is tell you what he believes.

Or somebody else will say; "Are you implying I'm not saved?" Someone else will say; "Well what makes you think that's right and everybody else is wrong?" See, argue. Somebody else says; "Well, you know, I'll tell you; I'll go to heaven but I'm not going to do this, that, and the other."

All Saul said was; "What do you want me to do? You do the talking. My mouth is closed. I'm listening, I'm listening."

Well, God said to him in **verse 10**; "*All right Saul, go to Damascus.*" "Oh my goodness, to Damascus? That's where I was headed. Those people hate me. Those people know who I am. I hated them."

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“Lord; why don’t you send me to Jerusalem; that’s a bigger place anyway? And the temple is up there. Peter, James, and John are up there. They’re important people. Let me go; *“You go to Damascus.”*”

Let me tell you something, God will meet a man at his point of rebellion. That’s exactly right. He was going to Damascus to start with. He was going there to persecute these people to oppose them, to make fun of them. Now God said; “You go sit at their feet.”

Somebody may be sitting there and say; “Well, maybe I’m not saved, but I’m sure not going, I’m not going to listen to that Mahan fellow.” It might be you’ll have to. But I’ll tell you this; “I’m not going to go where those sovereign grace people are.” You may have to.

Old Naaman had to go to the muddy river Jordan, nowhere else would do. And God said to Saul, “Go to Damascus. Go down there where those people are that you’ve despised and ridiculed and made fun of; I’ll meet you at your point of rebellion.”

“You’ll go right there to the people where you were going to persecute and you’ll become one of them. And you’ll become humble and you’ll sit at their feet and sit with them and be identified with them while the world makes fun of you.” That’s right!

So he said, *“I couldn’t see anything for the glory of that light. Everything else was lost and dung. So being led by the hand of them with me I came to Damascus.”*

And you know **verse 12**; listen to this; *“And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of the people which dwelt there came to me.”* Ananias?

You know, Saul of Tarsus is a big fish. He’s an important fellow. *“He’s a Pharisee of Pharisee’s.”* He’s a graduate of Gamaliel University. He’s one of the Sanhedrin. He’s a close personal friend of the high priest.

It looks like the Lord would have sent at least John or James or for that matter Peter to talk to them. This man is somebody, (huh) just an unknown, unheard of, humble, devout, believer God sent.

You see, God always, if God ever brings a man down, strips him and humbles him, shuts his mouth, and he’s saying, *“What must I do to be saved;”* God will send him a preacher. But He’ll send him an honest preacher, a true preacher, and a plain man, and a simple man, with a straight-forward, truthful, Gospel message, and he’ll be listening.

And do you know what he’s saying. Here’s the message. He said; *“Ananias came to me.”* You see; people are today, so geared to the importance of the preacher. The preacher’s not important; it’s the message.

It’s not who preaches there it’s what’s preached there. What’s the message? It doesn’t matter who preaches it. Apollos watered, Paul planted, and God gave the increase. We’re nothing.

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He came to me and He said; **verse 14**, *“Brother Saul, the God of our fathers hath chosen thee.”* It was the first thing He said: *“The God of our fathers hath chosen thee.”* So you didn't choose God; He chose you. You didn't seek God; He sought you. And you called on Him because He called on you.

**“Tis not that I did choose thee
Lord that could not be
This heart would still refuse thee
Thou hast chosen me.”**

And He's chosen you that you should know His will. Old Saul knew his will of command; *“Thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt. Thou shalt, thou shalt not.”* Saul knew that. He studied that all his life.

He didn't know God's will of redemption. **Hebrews 10** talks about it; *“Lo I come to do thy will O God, by the which will we're sanctified forever by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.”* That's His redemptive will.

“And God hath chosen you that you should see the Just One.” Christ is the Just One. *“He died the just for the unjust to bring us to God. He died that God may be just and justifier.”* And you're going to see the just one, the holy one, the righteous one, the one who enables God to be righteous and holy and just and save you and me.

And you're going to hear His voice. He's going to speak peace to you. He's the only one who can. I hear preachers shake a man's hand and say, “Now you're saved brother.” How do you do that? How do you tell a person they're saved?

“How do you speak peace when there is no peace?” You can't see the heart. Only God can speak peace. And He said: *“Saul; God chose you that you should know His will, see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth (His comforting words) thy sins be forgiven thee.”* And you'll be His witness!

This is God's method of grace. How God saves sinners!