

## **Preaching the Gospel to a Sinner**

Sunday, may 29<sup>th</sup>, 1988

### **Acts 22:14-16**

*“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.”*

Here is our subject today, “PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO A SINNER.” If you would like to follow along in your Bible, (I wish you would). I will be using several verses of Scripture today. All of them, or most of them, are from the Book of Acts Chapter 22. Would you turn there in your Bible to Acts 22? I am going to read verses 14 and 15. Listen and read carefully.

In Acts Chapter 22:14, the Scripture says; *“The God of our fathers hath chosen thee that thou shouldest know His will and see the 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.”*

Who is speaking here? This is the Apostle Paul giving an account of his conversion. That is what this is. Paul is before a group of people, a group of very religious people, the ceremonial Jews. These people tried to have him arrested and put in jail for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul is giving, in the Hebrew tongue, an account of his conversion.

If you will go back to verse 3 in Acts 22 (this is so important and interesting; I just have not picked up anything lately that has been more intriguing and interesting than this account of his conversion), the first thing that Paul tells them is that before he came to know the Lord, before he was converted, before he came to know Christ, or as we say today, before he was “saved,” he was a religious man, he was very, very religious and believed in God. He kept (observed) the law and the ceremonies.

Look at verse 3, He says; *“I am a Jew.”* He said this in the Hebrew tongue. Paul said in Philippians 3, *“I am a Hebrew of Hebrews.”* His mother was a Hebrew and His father was a Hebrew. I am a Jew, a ceremonial Jew; I am a traditional Jew; I am a law-abiding and sacrificing Jew. He said, “That is what I am, from the city of Tarsus.”

He said secondly, *“I have studied under Gamaliel.”* There were two great schools in that day. One of them was the school of Gamaliel, one of the most well-known teachers of the Bible. Paul said, “I was his disciple; I sat under him and learned from him.”

Paul said, “I was not only taught in the law, but he said that he was taught in the traditions of my father and I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a member of the Sanhedrin.” He said, “*I was a man who was blameless*” as far as the outward law is concerned. I was very zealous toward God as you are this very day. I was religious, moral, educated, steeped in tradition, and full of religious zeal. I was zealous toward God, but I didn’t really know God.”

In verse 4 he continues; He said; “I was not only zealous of the law and morality, religion, the tradition of my fathers and zealous before God, but ‘*I persecuted this way unto death, binding and delivering men and women into prison.*’”

What did Paul mean by, “*I persecuted this way?*” Paul’s way was the way of works. “*This way*” that he refers to is the way of free grace. His way was the way of ceremony, Sabbath keeping and tithe paying. “*This way*” is the way of faith in Christ Jesus the Lord.

His way was the way of human merit. “*This way*” is the way of mercy through Christ Jesus. His way man gets all of the glory. “*This way*” God gets all the glory. His way was the way of ceremony, “*this way,*” was the way of the crucified, risen, and exalted Christ.

Many seem to have that opinion today. They are zealous toward God. People are religious and they are moral. They are pious; they are educated in the best religious schools and seminaries. They persecute this way of grace, this way of mercy, this way of sovereign love, this way of substitution, this way of the blood atonement and this way of a crucified Christ.

They say, “I’ll worship God but not this way. I will take salvation, but not this way. I’ll go to heaven but not this way; I will go my way, not this way.” This is what Paul is saying here, “I persecuted this way, because I had another way.”

Paul is saying, “I had a way.” “*There is a way that seemeth right unto men; the end is death and destruction,*” but there is a way. Christ our Lord said, “*I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.*”

Let us see what else he says; He said, “I was a Jew, a ceremonialist, a legalist, a separator, a traditionalist and was zealous toward God. But I did not know God. I persecuted the only real way. I persecuted the truth; I persecuted the way of life; I

persecuted the way of mercy. I tried to kill people that believed it. I hated them and cast them into prisons.”

In verses 6 and 7 the Scripture says this, “*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?*”

Look at this proud, religious Pharisee. Look at this proud, self-righteous religionist. He was riding high on his white stallion, leading his followers, his disciples in opposition to Jesus Christ. He was going to put salvation out of business. He was going to put God Almighty out of business. He was going to abolish the name of Jesus Christ from the face of the earth.

He was riding down to Damascus to arrest some poor believers and to cast them into prison, but God arrested him. God crossed his path. God encountered this man. “*A great light shone from heaven.*”

Here are the grand results of that meeting with God; He said five words, “*I fell to the ground.*” That is where God will put every man and every woman with whom He effectually deals with in mercy. He will put them on the ground, humbled by His power. That’s right!

The proud must be brought down and the proud must be humbled. The high must be brought low. The self-righteous must be exposed and must be slain. God will bring a man down before He lifts him up. God will strip a man before He clothes him. He will put him in the dust before He exalts him.

You see; “*God Almighty is nigh unto them who are of a broken heart.*” David wrote, “*The sacrifices of God are a broken heart, a broken and a contrite spirit, O Lord; Thou will not despise. God resisteth the proud. He gives grace to the humble.*” God saves them.

These are all Scriptures; “*God saveth such as be of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.*” Let me tell you something, the greatest enemy of your soul is human pride. That’s right! God said, “*Six things I hate, yea seven, are an abomination to Me.*” The very first one He names is a “*proud look. A haughty spirit goeth before a fall, a proud look before destruction.*”

God will bring a man down. If God is going to deal in grace and mercy with a sinner, He will strip him, break him, and bring him into the dust to make his headquarters in the dust. That is right! The Lord is going to have all the glory.

Look at verses 8, 9, and 10: “*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.*”

Here is this proud, religious Pharisee and God has encountered him. God met Him and the Lord broke him and put him in the dust. There he is lying on the ground, blinded by that light of God’s holiness. That is what brings a man down; it is the holiness of God.

He brought old Job down. Job said, “*I have heard of you Lord but now mine eye seeth Thee (in your Holiness); therefore, I hate myself. I repent in sack cloth and ashes.*” If you will read the Book of Isaiah, this dear man Isaiah “woes” everybody in Chapter 5; “*Woe is you; woe is them and woe are they.*”

In Isaiah Chapter 6, Isaiah says; “*I saw the Lord, High and lifted up and His Holiness and His beauty and His glory filled the temple. I cried Woe is me; I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips; I am cut off.*”

When the beloved John heard the voice of Christ on the Isle of Patmos, he turned and saw Him and “*fell at His feet as a dead man.*”

The best posture for a believer is at the feet of Christ. Here is this proud Pharisee, lying on the ground, blinded by the light of God, blinded by His Holiness and His glory. Saul of Tarsus looks up, tries to look up through those sightless eyes and he cried, “*Who art Thou Lord, who art Thou?*” The answer came back, “*I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest. I am this way.*”

Do you remember back in verse 4 when he said, “*I persecuted this way;*” He persecuted “*the way,*” God’s way?” Christ said, “*I’m Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest.*” “I am Jesus of Nazareth made in the likeness of flesh, but very God of very God. I’m Jesus of Nazareth, I was dead but I am alive forever more. I’m Jesus of Nazareth, Lamb of God, but King of Kings and Lord of Lords. I’m Jesus of Nazareth, a sacrifice to put away sin, now exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour. That is who I am!”

Oh that we might need Him. This will happen when a man meets Him. We've been doing business with preachers. We've been shaking hands, bargaining with soul-winners. We've been joining people up, signing cards and pledges.

There are not many folks who have met the King. There are not many folks who have encountered the Son of God. Not many men have done business with "*Him, with whom we have to do.*" This is what happens when a man does business with him. Paul fell to the ground and he said, "*Who are you?*" The Lord Jesus Christ told him.

Then, Paul said; "*Lord, what will you have me do?*" He is ready to listen now. Did you know that there are a lot of folks not ready to listen? It is hard to find a listening ear. There are plenty of mouths going, but not many ears tuned in. It is so hard to find a listening ear.

Are you ready to listen? Have you ever been ready to listen? Oh, to find someone that would have ears to hear. Our Lord said, "*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Take heed how you hear and what you hear.*" He is ready to listen now. Usually a man is ready to listen when he is brought down in that shape; He is ready to listen.

Look at the next verses 12, and 13: "*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 one named Ananias came to me as a devout man."* In other words, God sent him a preacher. They got Paul up off the ground there on the road to Damascus and took him to this town and to a street called, "*Straight,*" I believe it was. He was blind for several hours and then God sent him a preacher. He always does!

If God is pleased to deal in mercy with a sinner, He will send him a preacher. He will send a preacher of the Gospel. He won't send a singer or a professional soul-winner. He won't send a fast talking con man or to a fellow for a handout begging for money; He will send a preacher, His preacher, His prophet.

That's right; He sent Phillip to the Eunuch. Phillip didn't take up an offering either. He came to the Eunuch with the Gospel of Christ. He sent Peter to Cornelius. He sent Paul to Lydia and to the Philippian jailor. God deals in mercy with your soul, reveals His Holiness and your sins, and makes you shut your mouth. He opens your ears, and puts you in the dust. If you ever cry, "*Lord, what will you have me to do?*" He will send you a preacher.

*“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach except they be sent?”* God sends His preachers.

He commissions them, He anoints them, He ordains them, and He sends them. Paul wrote in Ephesians, *“In whom you trusted after you heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation.”* That is when you trusted Him; it was when you heard the Gospel, the only Gospel, the Gospel of God, the Gospel of His glory, the Gospel of His grace, and the Gospel concerning His Son.

Ananias came to Saul of Tarsus and here is the message that he preached to him; do you want to hear it? Better still, why don't you read it for yourself here in Chapter 22:14 and 15: *“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.”*

Evidently, Ananias didn't know that you weren't suppose to preach election to sinners because that is the first thing that he said. This is the very first thing that he said to this Saul of Tarsus, this heathen, pagan, philosophical religionist, this moralistic, ceremonial religionist. He said, *“The God of our fathers hath chosen you.”* In other words, the first thing that the preacher told the sinner was that *“Salvation is of the Lord.”* It is not something that you do for God it is something that God does for you.

“I want to clear the air,” is what Ananias was saying. *“I want you to understand that salvation is of the Lord.”* God is not waiting on you to do something. God came down here to do something for you. In other words; *“You didn't choose Me; I chose you. We love Him because He first loved us.”*

Tis not that I did choose thee,  
Lord that could not be.

This heart of mine would still refuse Thee,  
But Thou hast chosen me.

Salvation always begins with God, and not with the sinner. Salvation is an eternal matter. Did you know that salvation is an eternal matter? That's right, *“We were chosen in*

*Christ before the foundation of the world. God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation.”*

So, it has to begin with God because we weren’t alive back there in the beginning, before the salvation of the world. We didn’t have any say-so. God Almighty decreed this to happen. “*Known unto God are all His works from the beginning.*” That is what the Word says. “*Salvation is of the Lord.*”

Salvation is an eternal matter. Another reason that salvation is of the Lord is because sinners are dead. Saul of Tarsus wasn’t on his way to a prayer meeting when God struck him down. He was on his way to kill Christians. “*Sinners are dead in trespasses and sin.*” God has to give them life. Dead men don’t make decisions. “*You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.*” The initiative is God’s initiative.

“*Salvation is of the Lord*” because sinners have a contrary will. Our wills are contrary to God’s will. Christ said, “*You will not come to me that you might have life. This is condemnation, light has come into this world but men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.*”

My friend; the miracle of salvation is what Ananias is saying to Saul of Tarsus, “*Salvation is of the Lord. The God of our fathers hath chosen thee.*” Just like when “*Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.*” Saul found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Just like Abraham of old, when he was called out of Ur of the Chaldees, even so God called Saul of Tarsus. “*God Almighty sent me to call you, by His Spirit to awaken you,*” Ananias said. You see, the miracle of salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end, from Alpha to Omega. “*For by grace have you been saved through faith; that is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast.*” *We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus.*”

We are born of God. We are born from above. We are not only born of God; we are taught of God. Christ said, “*No man cometh unto Me except My Father draw him, and they all shall be taught of God. He that hath learned of the Father cometh to Me.*”

We are not only taught of God, but we are called of God. “*He called us by a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ before the world began.*” He called us.

“*We are kept by the power of God through faith, unto Him who is able to keep you from falling.*” We are glorified by God. “*Whom He foreknew; He predestinated to be*

*conformed to the image of His Son. Whom He predestinated; He called; whom He called; He justified; whom He justified; He glorified. What shall we say to these things, if God be for us who can be against us?"*

So, Ananias came to the sinner and the first thing he said was, "*God chose you.*" God wouldn't pass you by. God set His affections on you. The God of our fathers, the eternal living God hath chosen you. Then he said, "*He hath chosen you that you should know His will.*"

Now, I told you as Saul told us himself, he was a student of the Scriptures. He was a learned man, an educated Pharisee. He was himself, a teacher of the Scriptures. So, he knew something about God's will of command. He was a student of the law. He was a student of the ceremonies and sacrifices. He knew the will of command, but he didn't know God's will of redemption.

Do you know God's will of redemption? "*The God of our fathers hath chosen you that you should know His will,* (His saving will, His will of redemption and His will of mercy). Listen to Hebrews 10. This is talking about Christ coming into the world. "*Then said I, lo I come to do thy will O God; in the volume of the Book it is written of Me. I come to do Thy Will O God. He taketh away the first, (the sacrifices, the tabernacles and the priesthood), and establishes the second by the which will I come to do Thy will O God. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all.*" God did all of this that we might know His redemptive will in salvation.

What is God's redemptive will? His redemptive will is in Jesus Christ. It is in the person, office, and work of Jesus Christ. God sent His Son to accomplish His redemptive will. The will of God is revealed in the person and work of His beloved Son.

That is where you learn the way of God, the will of God, the grace of God, the love of God, the mercy of God, and the wisdom and power of God. All of it is revealed in Christ. "*No man knoweth the Father but the Son; and He to whom the Son will reveal Him.*" It is all revealed in Christ.

Come to Christ and learn the will of God. He said, "*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me and him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out: For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of Him that sent Me and this is the will of Him that sent Me that of all which He hath given Me, I will lose nothing but raise it up at the last day.*" That is the will of God!

Now Saul, God chose you and He chose you that you should know His will, His will of redemption and His eternal will. His will not be defeated. *"He worketh all things after the council of His own will. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious."*

Watch this third thing that He said to him, *"That you should see the Just One."* Not a Just One but the Just One, the only One. Who is this Just One? This Just One is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Just One. That is what Peter said back yonder in the early part of Acts, *"You crucified the Just One. Jesus Christ suffered the Just One for the unjust that He might bring us to God."*

Yes sir; God set Him forth as a propitiation, a mercy seat that God might prove His obedience and death, and be Just and Justifier, and redeem sinners like us. God has chosen you that you should know His will and that you should see the Just One.

What is it to see Him? Some preachers talk about visions and dreams. Don't ever listen to a preacher that puts any emphasis on dreams, not any more, the Word of God is complete. No, to see Him is to see Him in His Word. That's right; I am telling you the truth! To see Christ is to see Him in His Word.

You will see Christ in His promises, see Him in the pictures of the Old Testament, see Him in the patterns, see Him incarnate in human flesh, see Him obedient as our Representative. You will see Him on that cross, crucified as our scapegoat, as our sin offering and as our sacrifice. You will see Him raised as our Justifier. See Him ascended to the right hand of God. See Him seated as our intercessor. That is what it is to see Him.

To see Him is not to see a vision or to have a dream. God has nothing to say to you that He hasn't said through His Son in His Word. Nothing can be added to the testimony of the Gospel. Nothing can be added to the Words of Jesus Christ. The Book is closed! Everything you need to know about God is in here; it is complete.

*"Believe the record that God hath given concerning His Son. The Son of God hath come and given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true and that we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ."* That is a true God and eternal life!

There was a fellow in hell one time that asked Abraham to send somebody back to the earth and tell them not to come to that awful place. Abraham said, *"They have the Word of God."* He said, *"No; they will believe if one rose from the dead."* Now wait a minute!

Abraham said, “*If they don’t hear the Word of God they won’t believe though one rose from the dead.*”

One did rise from the dead and they didn’t believe Him. Nothing can be added to His Word or His testimony or to His truth. God is not going to bring anymore messengers than the one He sent and that is Jesus Christ. That is the final messenger.

Watch this next line, He says, “*That you should see the Just One.*” See who He is and hear the voice of God and His mouth. Christ said, “*He that heareth Me, heareth Him that sent Me.*” Christ is that Prophet who reveals Almighty God.

Have you heard Him? Have you heard Him speak through His Word? We have to hear Him who speaks from heaven and who speaks through His Word. Don’t go past the Word of God; it is sufficient; “*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*” That Word reveals Christ.