



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 22:1–30

“Paul’s Apology”

TRANSCRIPT

We are studying together the book of Acts, and we have come to chapter 22, in which Paul makes his defense in the temple at Jerusalem. And so if you have your Bibles or your New Testaments, turn with me to chapter 22, and we’re going to read the entire 22nd chapter for our Scripture reading.

[Message] “Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense 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.’

That’s probably a reference, primarily, to the death of Stephen.

“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.’”

You’ll notice that the apostle is told right here that the things that he is going to do are things that are appointed for him. This is the same word that is used in Acts chapter 13 in verse 48, where it is said that those whom God had ordained to eternal life believed; and so the same kind of appointment the apostle is appraised of here.

“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.’”

Again, the term “choice” suggests that God has had his hand on Paul for a long, long time. As he will say in Epistle to the Galatians, “From the time of his mother’s womb.” And, of course, as he says in other places, “From the ages past.” This is a verb, the one translated “chosen” in the Authorized Version, in verse 14, that means, literally, “To take into one’s hands.” And so it expresses a kind of personal appointment to the things that God would have for the apostle to do. This really is the answer to his question of what shall he do? And so God has appointed him to know his will, to see the Just One, and to hear the voice of his mouth. And he continues, verse 15:

“For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.”

Now, when he says “unto all men” he obviously does not mean all men without exception, but as the context makes very plain, all men without distinction. That is, both Jews and Gentiles because he has been appointed apostle of the Gentiles.

“And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

In the exposition, I’ll say something about this, in order to show that Ananias is not suggesting that the apostle is to be baptized for the remission of sins, in the sense that it is his water baptism that gains for him that blessing.

“And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw him saying unto me, ‘Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: For they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.’”

It’s one of the striking things is that the apostle protests this command from the Lord to get out of Jerusalem. Notice what he says.

“And I said, ‘Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.’”

In other words, looking at it from the standpoint of human reason, what better thing for Paul to do than to give testimony in Jerusalem, because he was the one who was so opposed to the Christians to this point. What more reasonable thing than for Paul to give his testimony in Jerusalem. But it illustrates the fact that human reason is not always to be identified with God’s will. And so even though he protests the Lord reiterates in the 21st verse.

“‘And he said unto me, depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.’ And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, ‘Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.’ [Words that call to mind the response to our Lord, himself.] And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air, the chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.”

To be examined by scourging was no pleasant experience. Paul, in describing his sufferings later to the Corinthians, speaks about the fact that he was beaten thrice, forty stripes save one, that other things happened to him along the same line. But to be beaten in Jewish punishment, was nothing like this scourging. To be scourged was to be beaten with a leather strap that had thongs in it that were made out of metal, iron, and very sharp pieces of bone so that it was very possible that a person should not survive scourging. And if he did survive, he might be maimed for life. It was a very, very terrible form of examination. I wouldn’t like to have that kind of examination. So it’s the occasion for Paul mentioning, now, that he was a Roman citizen.

“And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, ‘Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?’ When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, ‘Take heed what thou doest: For this man is a Roman.’ Then the chief

captain came, and said unto him, ‘Tell me, art thou a Roman?’ He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, ‘With a great sum obtained I this freedom.’”

Now, what he means by that is not what might appear at first reading. When he says, “with a great sum obtained I this freedom,” in the first place, we should not think that it cost money to become a Roman citizen. What he means is I paid some very big bribes in order to get this place of citizenship. But the second thing that he meant by it was, as he looked at Paul, it looks as if everybody can become a Roman citizen now. So it was really an attempt on his part to say, if even this fellow is a citizen, anybody can be a citizen these days. But back in the old days, you had to pay a considerable amount of money in order to become a citizen, that is money as a bribe.

“And Paul said, ‘But I was free born.’”

Now, evidently, Tarsus was the kind of city in which individuals who were there were Roman citizens and so, evidently, Paul’s parents were Romans citizens, at least his father.

“Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.”

And then, we shall read of Paul’s defense of himself before the council and the things that happened there, next Sunday, the Lord willing. That’s not the end of the sermon, however.

[Message] The subject for today in the exposition of the book of Acts is “Paul’s Apology.”

About fifteen years ago, perhaps fourteen, in expounding the book of Acts here in Believers Chapel, coming to Acts chapter 22, I made reference to the fact that men were frightened and disturbed over the ultimate purpose of God; and that many would think twice before subscribing to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, “There is a divinity that shapes our ends; rough hew them how we will.”

In one sense, I think, that particular question and problem is still with us. Men still are concerned over the ultimate purpose of God. They express it in different ways. They don’t go around and say, one to another, “What is the ultimate purpose of God,” because they have doubts about the existence of God, often. Or else, they express the fact that they have doubts about the existence of God. The terms that they really put it in are, what is the purpose of life? And one can note, if you just read the newspapers, that there is still, in fact in some sense, an increasing interest in this question, the purpose of life.

Now, you know, of course, that I keep up with the cartoons and the funny papers. And there are eight or ten of those columns that I read every morning if I possibly can. It’s striking how many of them deal with this question. And if you will just read the funny papers for just four or five months, you will see that there are a lot of these cartoons that are addressing this question in various ways.

There are two little boys, and they are always drawn in this most striking way. Their hair sticks straight out, like this, you know. And one of them is saying, “Isn’t there anyone out there who can give me the answers to life’s most puzzling questions? What’s the meaning of life? Is man inherently good? And what’s the best doubt soft drink?” [Laughter] And the other little boy, sitting down on the curb, says, “Come on, Dave, be reasonable.” And so then Dave looks up and he shouts out to the air about him and in the general direction, perhaps, of the Lord God, “All right then, how about a little hint?” So we’re still concerned with these questions. There are several of the cartoons that regularly feature individuals who answer life’s most perplexing questions; some of them go up to talk to the guru, for example, to get an answer to this question of the ultimate purpose of God.

There’s a great deal of doubt in our day among intellectuals that one can discern any ultimate purpose at all. Doubts come from several sources. They come from the scientific age of which we are a part. Many have different scientific reasons for thinking that there is no purpose evident at all in human life and that if one looks for an ultimate purpose, he will really find nothing. Then some find a great deal of doubt just looking at the state of the world; the unending bitter struggle for existence among the nations and among the peoples. Just think of the turmoil that exists in our newspaper reports.

Now, I’m an old man, but I can assure you, that you young people, who are here in the audience today, if you had lived fifty years ago and were reading the newspapers, you would find the same kind of headlines that you have today; in some ways, maybe a little worse, in some ways, a little better. The names are different, the problems are different, but the problems are the same. And so, today, when we read about South Africa and Lebanon, and Israel, and Nicaragua, we are reading about the same things that we read about when we were young and those same ultimate problems are represented there. And so individuals looking at the things that are happening in our society might have reasonable reason to question, is there any purpose at all in human existence?

Still others find a great deal of problem with the suffering that exists in the earth. How can there possibly be a God, out there, and particularly if we assume he is a God of love. Incidentally, the idea that God is a God of love is a biblical idea. It’s derived from the Scriptures, not from outside the Scriptures, but it is derived from the Scriptures. The gods of the heathen were not gods of love; they were gods of vengeance. And the worst kinds of gods. The idea of a God of love is a Christian concept; but it has been taken over by the world, and the world, ignorantly, in my opinion, think that it’s their idea. It’s “our” idea. But assuming that there is a God of love, and the world taking that assumption, has transformed that concept into a sentimental kind of god, who doesn’t have a strain of justice in his character at all, but is simply a sentimental god.

How can you understand the things that are happening in our society, when the helpless are suffering? People are poor and persecuted and oppressed. And, as you look out over the world itself,

it’s not surprising that people should say, is there any purpose? If you speak out of the darkness and out of the unbelief of a non-Christian relationship to ultimate relation, this is the reasonable thing for you to ask.

Now, the apostle was an individual who was fully acquainted with all of this. The problems of his day were the same types of problems. Darkness, futility, or night; those were the questions that must have come to the men of that day or, on the other hand, the vision of God standing within the shadows, keeping watch over his own.

Paul and others, who believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, said that they had found the solution to life’s problems in the Lord Jesus himself and in the work that he had done for sinners.

Now, one finds this coming to the fore again, when Paul appears in the temple area, asks for the privilege of defending himself, and then gives us this marvelous defense of his ministry and his life, before the largely Jewish audience gathered there, who were anxious to put him to death.

He spoke in the Hebrew tongue. Now, that means in the Aramaic tongue; and that was the language of the people. And so, consequently, he was one of them. And when they heard him speak in this language, for some thought he was an Egyptian, and perhaps others had questions about who he was at of any kind. But, at any rate, he spoke in their language, and immediately a hush fell over the audience because they recognized that they could understand him, and perhaps he was one of them.

He accommodates himself to his Jewish hearers; that is, he says things that they would understand and perhaps would appreciate. He speaks about his background, how he studied at the feet of Gamaliel, he speaks about his zeal for God. He always acknowledged that the Jewish people had a zeal for God. He said to the Romans that they had a zeal for a god, but it was not according to knowledge. No question about zeal for a god. Just as today, we might acknowledge that a Jehovah’s Witness, or a Mormon, might have a zeal for what they think is a true god; but it’s not according to knowledge.

He, also, speaks of enlightenment coming to him, through the instrumentality of a devout Jew, Ananias by name. He spoke about his past record of persecuting the church, persecuting the church even unto death. So the apostle identified himself with the circumstances in which he was. But you must not get the idea that the apostle was trying to compromise in any way. He was not trying to compromise.

Some years ago, I read an article written by a Presbyterian minister, an evangelical, Andrew Jumper. He’s now, he was in Texas; I think he was a Texan, well, he’s not a Texan, but he had a church in West Texas for a good while, he’s now I believe in St. Louis in a church. He wrote about his beginnings in Mississippi, but in the course of this article, which was entitled, incidentally, “Spitting with the Wind.” He described how he had seen in the newspaper reported rules that were given to the passengers of Wells Fargo stagecoaches, about a hundred and twenty-five years ago. And some of the rules that were set out were these, and now, these are quotations from the Wells Fargo directives that were given to their passengers. Abstinence from liquor is requested, but if you must drink, share the bottle. To do otherwise makes you appear selfish and un-neighborly. Buffalo robes are provided for your comfort during cold weather. Hogging robes will not be tolerated, and the offender will be made to ride with the driver. Don’t snore loudly while sleeping, or use your fellow passenger’s shoulder for a pillow. He or she may not understand. Hidden, forbidden topics of discussion are stagecoach robberies and Indian uprisings. [Laughter] I think about going through the machinery out at the airport and they say, “Don’t make any jokes about hijacking planes.” And so they didn’t like for you to talk like that. And then there were some further commands, and this is the one that I want to mention. If ladies are present, gentlemen are urged to forego smoking cigars and pipes, as the odor of same is repugnant to the gentle sex. Chewing tobacco is permitted, but spit with the wind, not against it. [Laughter]

Now, Mr. Jumper said he grew up in Mississippi, and so he was accustomed to seeing spittoons around, I hate to say this, but I grew up, also, in Alabama as a little boy, and I can still remember going in public places and seeing spittoons, too. And it wasn’t always clean around those

spittoons, either. But, at any rate, Mr. Jumper says he remembers that. And he said, “Do you remember, there were two rules about spitting, and one was, if you chewed tobacco, now, first of all, don’t swallow.” Now some of you don’t even understand what that means, but I’ll tell you, if you had ever swallowed tobacco, you’d understand what that meant. Don’t swallow. “And secondly, spit with the wind.”

Now, the apostle was an individual who in these inconsequential things, he spat with the wind. But when it came to things that were really important, the things that had to do with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul didn’t hesitate to spit against the wind. Of all the things that he could have said to that audience in the temple area, the thing that he said was probably the worst thing, so far as his own safety was concerned.

He went back, he gave his testimony of how he came to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke about him as “The Lord” and he also spoke about him as the one through whom forgiveness of sins comes.

You can understand why, when he finally made the mention of the term Gentiles, they were so upset that they wanted to put him to death right there.

Well, let’s just notice a few of the things that Luke mentions, as he tells the story of this great defense. Paul began by saying, “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.” Now, that was a recommendation for him, because Gamaliel was one of those unusual rabbis, so unusual, so marvelous as a teacher of rabbinic law, that he came to be understood as “Rabban Gamaliel.”

Now, they had three ways of speaking of rabbis or teachers. One, is to call him simply, rab. That meant a great person. But then, the second of the degrees of high regard was to call a person a rabbi, which means, my great one, or my teacher. But to call him, rabban, meant “our teacher” and that was the highest accolade. And Gamaliel was one of the seven ancient rabbis who were called Rabban Gamaliel. In fact, it was said of him, “As Aquinas among the schoolmen was called Doctor Angelicus, and Bonaventura Doctor Seraphicus; so Gamaliel was called “The Beauty of the Law.” So

to be brought up at the feet of Gamaliel was to be brought up at the feet of one who was called rabban. You couldn’t have a better educational background than to be brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. And, further, Paul says he was “taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.”

Now, he goes on and he mentions that he was not a person, who was from the beginning in support of Christian doctrine. He says, in the 4th verse, “And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering unto prisons or into prisons both men and women.” Notice that he calls Christianity: “this way.” That’s a characteristic term in the book of Acts, derived probably, at least in part, from our Lord’s statement of the fact that to come to know God is to come to understand “the way.”

This past week, there was an interesting article in *The Dallas Morning News*. It was entitled, “Ex-fundamentalists Form Support Group.” Subheading, “Organization offers help, guidance, to those leaving the fold, the leaders say.” It was a team of former religious fundamentalist, who are offering help for withdrawal pains suffered by people who are trying to break away from forms of religious extremism. Now, I’m not going to say anything about the term “fundamentalism,” in one sense, it’s a good term; there are some things that are associated with it that are not so good, but the interesting thing about it to me is that these individuals what is called “Fundamentalists Anonymous.” So if some of you sitting in the audience really who want to get out of Christian orthodoxy, well, you have a support group. You can go to these “Fundamentalists Anonymous” and they will show you how you can be extricated from your problem. I don’t think that we would have many in Believers Chapel, who would be anxious to be extricated from sound Christian doctrine.

But, at any rate, there evidently are some; and they’ve formed an organization. And I might say this, they’ve learned something from the fundamentalists, too, because the article ends with, “Fundamentalists Anonymous,” which is now supported by contributions from members and other interested people. So they’ve learned the way to keep the movement going is to beg for money. So while they say they are departing from the doctrine, they are holding to the practices in order to have

some money come into the treasury to support their movement. Now, all of that’s kind of humorous, I think, and I predict that it will go down the drain like so many movements that don’t have any real sound basis at all.

But what was striking about it was one or two other things that appeared in it. This individual, I won’t mention his name, it ought to be mentioned, like the names of those who are responsible for SMU getting the violations; but, anyway, this individual said, “Now, he doesn’t want us to understand that he doesn’t, he’s not still a Bible-believing Christian, this man said, ‘He said that although he and the other man still consider themselves Bible-believing Christians, they have no religious agenda.’” But then, in a moment, he says this, now, you’ll see how “this” will tally with Bible believing Christians. He said, “The fundamentalist mindset is one that sees its viewpoint as the only right one. All else is wrong. They say, only those who believe in Jesus Christ will go to heaven, that leaves out an awful lot of people who are going to hell.” This is incredibly arrogant. Now, here is a man who believes the Bible, he says, and yet he says that if Christians say that salvation is only through Christ, that’s incredibly arrogant. But I’d like to remind this Bible-believing Christian and anyone else who might be moved by that kind of argument or that kind of statement that the Bible is “that kind” of book. For example, the Lord Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” So when a man argues that way, he’s not arguing against the fundamentalists; he’s arguing against our Lord. Our Lord said this in many ways. He also said, “I am the door,” not a door, the door. “By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved; and shall go in and out and find pasture.”

And, if like many of our modern New Testament scholars, you are upset over taking passages out of the Gospels, as if they really came from the mouth of Jesus, we turn over to the book of Acts, and we read the Apostle Peter saying, “There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.” And, if you don’t like Peter, because he’s identified with things that you are not in sympathy with, we turn over to Paul and he said, “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

In other words, the Bible, from its beginning, really, from its beginning, in the Old Testament on through to the end, affirms that there is one way of salvation and that one way of salvation is the Lord Jesus Christ. Call it narrow minded, call it arrogant; but don’t blame it on the fundamentalists, and don’t blame it on the orthodox. They are simply following the teaching of Holy Scripture. Don’t say, “I believe the Bible,” and then object to the uniqueness of the way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Any thinking person would see that that’s erroneous. And so for Fundamentalists Anonymous, for your sake, I’m glad you’re anonymous; because the rest of us would find it very irrational to have a position such as is put out in the newspaper.

At any rate, Paul speaks about this as “the way.” “I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.”

Now, he goes on to tell how he went to Damascus, a journey of about one hundred and forty to fifty miles, and since we have already expounded Acts chapter 9, and there is a good bit of repetition, we will avoid the detailed exposition of this particular part of the passage. Just remind you that the apostle left the city of Jerusalem, with a company of men. They went out the Damascus gate, with the temple police. They went by Calvary, I can imagine him shaking his hand at Calvary, saying, “You deceiver, we are going to get after you and your followers. And we are going to put you into prison and we are going to put your followers to death; and we are going to rid the earth of any testimony to Jesus of Nazareth.”

Finally, after the journey of one hundred and forty or one hundred and fifty miles, the apostle reached the slopes of Mount Hermon, looked down upon ancient Damascus, which someone has described as “a handful of pearls in a goblet of emerald.” The moon with, at noontime, with the sun’s rays, it was hot, they were piercing down like swords, or like Texas in August. And, suddenly, the apostle saw a burning, bright light that was brighter than the sun. What it was, he doesn’t tell us. He doesn’t tell us it was lightning. He doesn’t even tell us it was only light. The description of our Lord’s transfiguration and the appearance change that took place is that his face shone like the sun. And so what seems to have happened, though this is only speculation, what seems to have happened

is that our Lord was so glorified or appeared in such a glorified form that even the sun became pale by the brightness of his countenance. And it was sufficient to blind Paul.

And so when the apostle fell down upon the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” We can imagine a lot of things that Paul might have said to that. “I’m not persecuting thee, Lord.” But, nevertheless, from the standpoint of heaven, to persecute the saints is to persecute the Lord, the identity is that close. Paul answered, “Who art thou, Lord?” And he received the reply, “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.” What an eruption. What a revolution. What an upheaval in the heart of Paul. I can just imagine him saying, “But Lord, you died on the gallows, in a poor and insignificant country, and world history strode over you.” But world history did not stride over him; he strides over world history, and he is the one who speaks to Paul after Paul thought he had been long gone from the face of this earth. That’s the fundamental problem of our society today and our generation. They think of our Lord as being an individual who lived two thousand years ago and he’s not going to trouble us in nineteen eighty-five. But, O, how different the truth is. He is more alive than any of you poor dying souls in the audience. He is the one who is alive. We are the ones who are dead. We are the ones who are on our way to physical death; but Jesus Christ is alive. He’s the one with whom we have to do.

Now, Paul goes on to say that he couldn’t see. He was led by the hand. He came to Damascus. The Lord appeared to Ananias and said, “Go over to the street called Straight, to the house of Judas, and you’re going to see Paul there.” And Ananias didn’t like that idea at all because he had heard about Paul and he had heard what Paul had done. But he was assured by the Lord that he prays. The first time that this Pharisee is praying. I can imagine Ananias saying, “But all Pharisees pray. They pray three or four times a day.” But for the first time, this Pharisee really prays. That’s the way you can tell. “Behold, he prayeth.” So Ananias swallowed, and left. And he came to Paul and he said, “Brother Saul, receive thy sight.” Paul said, “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.”

Not all men without exception, all men without distinction, the fundamental understanding of the New Testament rests in the understanding of that little phrase. “Unto all men,” and in a moment he’ll mention the word Gentiles, for he is made an apostle of the Gentiles. He means, you’re going to speak, not simply to Israel; you’re going to speak to Gentiles. And you’re going to tell them what you have seen and what you heard on the Damascus road. And then, Ananias looks at Paul and says, “Why tarriest thou? Arise, be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

It’s not uncommon for people to suggest this text teaches that the way we get our sins washed away is by being baptized in water. Unfortunately, that opinion has gained a great deal of credence. It’s just another way of thwarting the doctrine of the grace of God.

Now, if you read this passage, in the original text, and, after all, all doctrinal questions are settled by an appeal to the text, now if you’ll look at this in the text, and I’m going to speak technically for a moment, if you’ll look at this in the text, you will find that the word translated here “calling” in “calling on the name of the Lord,” is participial in form. You don’t have to understand this, but I want to say it, because there may be somebody listening here or over the radio when it goes out in various places, who might understand. This is a participle in form. Now, it’s a particular kind of participle. It’s what is called an adverbial participle or some grammarians call it a kind of participle like a circumstantial participle and then, attached to it, the nuance that appears in the text. Almost all interpreters, whether orthodox or non-orthodox, admit that this is a circumstantial participle of means or an adverbial participle of means the same thing, different terms.

Now, in cases like that, you are justified in giving the sense of it, in adding the English word, to make a perfect rendering of the text, the little English preposition “by.” So let’s read it that way and let’s remember, we don’t have in the original text punctuation marks, so we can put commas where we wish. Let’s eliminate the comma after “wash away thy sins,” let’s eliminate that. An editor added that, Paul didn’t say that. He didn’t say, “Comma there, by the way, folks.” Commas are not in the original text. So let’s read it this way. “And now why tarriest thou arise get yourself baptized and wash away your sins by calling on the name of the Lord.” Now, in that case, we have the forgiveness

of sins, the washing away of sins, linked with calling on the name of the Lord. That is a personal faith, calling on the Lord. So “Arise, get yourself baptized in testimony to your salvation and wash away your sins by calling on the name of the Lord.” That’s the way that text should be read.

Now, if you have any doubt about it, and I don’t think you should have any doubt about it, because I told you that. [Laughter] You understand, that’s a joke. Now, for those of you here visiting, you have to understand. I hope you understand.

Romans chapter 10 in verse 13, now, the apostle is writing to the Romans, after this, and he is saying in verse 12 of Romans 10, “For there is no difference between the Jews, the Greeks, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”

He said in verse 11, “For the Scripture sayeth, “Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” And then, in verse 13, using the very same word that Ananias used in speaking to him originally in Damascus, he writes, “For whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” So to be baptized and to wash away your sins by calling on the name of the Lord is what Ananias told Paul. He was not to wash away his sins by being baptized in water; he was to be baptized in water because he had called on the name of the Lord, and his sins had been washed away. It’s as simple and yet as significant as that.

And, of course, what is ultimately the thing, the spiritual reality that lies behind that is the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s why we can call upon the name of the Lord, and be saved. It’s because of what the Lord has done, in his death on Calvary’s cross.

One of the commentators has said, “My friend loves me. I’m in his heart as well as in his power. I’m in his love as well as in his light. You ask me how I know it, and I take you not to the infinite spaces where stars march in rhythmic order, not to the hedge row where God smiles in flowers, but to the rough and brutal cross of Calvary, to the hour of the dying of the Messiah. God commendeth His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. My brethren, such love is royal and royal love makes claims upon loyalty.” So he can say, “Wash away

your sins by calling on the name of the Lord,” because there is a saving cross, where the Lord Jesus has borne the penalty of sinners.

Now, we don’t have time to talk about how this relates to Paul’s conversion. Maybe when we get to chapter 26, and we look again at Paul’s conversion, more briefly, we’ll say something about it. At any rate, at this point, Luke says, “And it came to pass that when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; And saw him saying unto me, ‘Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.’” And Paul goes on to talk about how he had persecuted Stephen, how he was standing by when he was put to death, he kept the raiment of those that slew him. And the Lord had said to him, “Depart: For I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.” And when he mentioned the word Gentiles, Luke says, “They gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, ‘Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.’” So the term Gentile was just like a match to a gasoline can. The word that stopped their ears.

Now, the apostle, I say, spat against the wind. He didn’t have to say that, you know. But he said it. He said it because that was God’s word to him. Now, in our day, we have all kinds of little things that we can avoid, too. We can avoid talking about the inspiration of the Scriptures, if we like. We can avoid talking about the deity of Christ. We can talk about a relationship to Christ. We can talk about Christ being all kinds of things for men and avoid the essential things that disturb our generation, that disturb human nature. But we do not do that. We, if we are faithful to the Word of God, and if we follow the example of Paul, we do not do that. We can avoid the cross. We can even speak of the cross in such a way as to deny its efficacy as an atoning instrumentality. We can talk of it as if the cross is an exhibition of the love of God; and, speak about how we can see how much God loves us through Christ’s suffering on the cross, and fail to mention that he was an atoning, penal sacrifice through substitution on the cross, thus, denying the essential features of the cross that make it a saving cross.

Or we can deny the resurrection as a resurrection of the body; we can speak about our Lord’s influence, living with us to this very day. And we can expatiate on the sweet thoughts of the influence Jesus has left behind. But then we would be spitting with the wind and not against the wind. And, we can talk about the grace of God. I have read in Christian literature over the past twenty-five years so many statements about the grace of God by individuals who don’t understand the grace of God. It’s sad. But it’s true.

I have friends in the ministry, who imperfectly understand the grace of God, but who constantly talk about the grace of God and the very next breath, talk about the free will of man, not realizing that they are denying the ultimate freeness of the grace of God by the affirmation of that human doctrine. The Reformers did not know that doctrine. Augustine did not know that doctrine. Paul did not know that doctrine. And our Lord, certainly, did not know it. He said, “No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” We will spit against the wind, if we have to. But we must be faithful to the Word of God. And so the apostle spat against the wind, and it got him into trouble for a time. But he’s been rejoicing ever since.

You see, you may live for a time, or you may live for eternity. And it’s safer, my dear friend, to live for eternity. It’s more rewarding. And you can be sure, if you live this life in faithfulness to the Lord Jesus, you’ll enjoy eternity. But if you want to live this life, to please yourself, you will discover that eternity will not be so wonderful. Now, for Christians, eternity is going to be wonderful; but for those who are not Christians, eternity is not wonderful.

Now, Paul found it necessary to make a claim for his citizenship, because he was going to experience scourging. We’ve already talked about that. So I’d like to conclude by just pointing out; I began by saying that men are frightened and disturbed today and that Paul had found the answer. And what is it? Well, it’s what he has heard and seen on the Damascus road. The shadows of drib doubt darken the soul, but out of the midst come the Lord Jesus, the Lord of Glory. And we know that life has meaning from two things: we know it from his cross, there the riddle of sin and suffering and death is solved in the suffering of a loving God.

Some years ago, I was near Peoria in Illinois, preaching in a little church in Washington, Illinois; and I turned on TV with the local pastor at eleven o’clock to hear the news. And after the program, they had a little five-minute program by an evangelical preacher whose name was Yokum. And what he said that night was hokum. But, anyway, his name was Yokum, and I don’t want to suggest he was not a Christian. I think, so far as I know, he was a Christian. His program was entitled, “Chapel Vision,” and he attempted to answer the question that night: Why do we die? His answer was in three parts, a good illustration of how to spit with the wind, so that we may be appreciated. That’s why we die. We’re never really appreciated till we die. Husbands never appreciate wives and wives never appreciate husbands until they die. O, Martha, please appreciate me a bit before that time. [Laughter] So we may learn, he said, secondly, so we may learn to appreciate permanence. Everything here is temporary. By dying, we learn to appreciate the permanent. And, three, and notice the profundity of this evangelical statement, we die to make room for others. [Laughter] How’s that? The young are coming along, and so the rest of us die in order to make room for them. Now, that is all that man said, in answering the question, why do we die. That’s a good way to spit with the wind. I imagine a lot of people read that, who were not believers, and thought some good thoughts in that, some good thoughts.

O, how bad. We know life has meaning from his resurrection, of course. There is an invisible world. There is a life after death, where suffering tormented creation bathed in garments of glory, with tears gone, shall flourish. And the Lord’s enterprise is going to succeed in this earth. Paul’s experience was an experience that is most significant for us. Is it simply a dead fact of ancient history? No. We may meet the Lord of Paul today. Have you noticed these two questions? “Who art thou, Lord?” Paul was willing to be taught. Are you willing to be taught? What was Paul taught? Well, I just mentioned it. He was taught, first of all, that he was the prophet who tells us the truth about life. And, secondly, he was the priest, who had offered the atoning sacrifice. And, thirdly, he was the king who would come and reign sovereign over this universe. “What shall I do, Lord?” Before, Paul had thought, “What shall I do, Moses?”

Today, individuals if they are interested at all in spiritual things say, “What should I do, O preacher?” Or “what shall I do, O church?” If they have a doctrine that the church is a means of salvation. But, “What shall I do, Lord?” is the ultimate question, and we’d rather follow the Lord than run with the multitude after the traditions of men. And the words are simple. “For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

If you are in this audience, and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has offered an atoning sacrifice for sinners, and who offers to you an explanation of life itself in his life and ministry; we invite you to come to him. Not to me. Not to this church. To him. And, in your heart, give yourself to him by his grace. Recognize, you cannot do it of yourself. But in that very recognition, call upon God to do the impossible and to bring you to the knowledge of him, whom to know is life eternal. Come to Christ. Believe in him. Let this be the red-letter day of your life. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we give Thee thanks for the things that Thou didst do for Paul the apostle, which have become the ministry of life to us. We are grateful and thankful. O God, give us the desire and the will and the motivation to please Thee, in spite of the opinions of the world about us. May we be faithful to Thy Word. And, Lord, if there are some here who have not come, do not have the sense of the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, by Thy grace so work in their lives that they see their lost and hopeless condition and flee to the true refuge, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray, in His name. Amen.