

Paul's Testimony of Conversion (Acts 22:12-22)¹

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1. Context

- Paul has recently returned from his third missionary journey.
- Back in Jerusalem, in the temple.
- Recognized by Jews of the diaspora who are in Jerusalem.
- Accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple, a riot ensues.
- Rescued from the mob by the authority of Rome.
- In the midst of recounting his persecution of "this Way" and subsequent radical conversion to Christ.

2. Passage (Acts 22:12-22)²

¹² *Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there,*
¹³ *came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him.*
¹⁴ *Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. ¹⁵ 'For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' ¹⁷ Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance ¹⁸ and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get*

out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' ¹⁹ *So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You.* ²⁰ *'And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'* ²¹ *Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'"* ²² *And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!"* (Acts [22:12-22](#))

3. Saul Receives Sight

¹⁴ *Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you'⁴ that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.* ¹⁵ *'For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.* (Acts [22:14](#))

- Did Paul choose God? Was he on the verge of salvation... about to choose to commit his life to following Jesus?
 - According to Jacob Arminius, election is explained by God knowing, in advance, who will respond in faith: “. . . in the foreknowledge of God . . . he knew from eternity which persons . . . would believe and through subsequent grace would persevere”⁵.
 - Is Paul's compatible with the Arminian view of election, (“divine predestination is based on what God foreknows about a person”)?
 - What did God know about Paul?
 1. Paul was an intractable enemy of Christianity, participating in the martyrdom of believers.

2. Paul wasn't even *close* to turning to Christ by his own volition.
3. Paul was on his way to Damascus to perpetrate more damage against the saints—he was in the very act of persecuting Jesus⁶ when God, *taking the initiative*, radically intervened to save Paul.
 - *Who sought whom* here?
 - While on the road to Damascus, did Paul finally succumb to prevenient grace?⁷
 - How does Ananias describe the order:
 1. Chosen
 2. To know His will by seeing and hearing Jesus (thereby qualifying as an Apostle)
 3. To be a radically-transformed witness—extensively rooted in Judaism and the OT.⁸
- Why was Paul struck blind? Was it just coincidence? Or is there a spiritual lesson intended?
 - John 9 - a man blind from birth
 - Jesus says relates the purpose of the man's blindness, "that the works of God should be revealed in him . . . As long as I am in the world, I am the **light of the world**" (John 9:5)
 - Testimony of blind man, "One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25).
 - ³² *Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind* (John 9:32).
 - Scripture relates the man's *physical* blindness, but was that also his spiritual condition?
 - Non-elect Jews judicially blinded by God
 - ¹¹ *. . . Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded* (Rom. 11:7).

- ¹⁴ . . . *their [the children of Israel] minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil **lies on their heart**. Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.* (2Cor. 4:14-16)
- ³ *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,* ⁴ *whose **minds the god of this age has blinded**, who do not believe, lest the **light of the gospel of the glory of Christ**, who is the image of God, should **shine on them**.* . . . ⁶ *For it is the **God who commanded light to shine out of darkness**, who has **shone in our hearts to give the light** of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* (2Cor. 4:3-6)
 - Why dark at creation?
 - Why first verbal creative/command?
 - What is the light source?
- The condition of the unsaved is typified in the Genesis account
 - ¹ *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ² *The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep* (Gen. 1:1-2a).
 - ² *And the **Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters*** (Gen. 1:2b).
 - ³ *Then God said, "**Let there be light**"; and there was light* (Gen. 1:3).
 - The very *first creative act of God* was to speak forth light and separate light from darkness (Genesis 1:4)! Why?

4. Does Baptism Save?

¹⁶ *And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.* (Acts 22:16)

- “[Acts 22:16] contains four segments: (a) arise (which is a participle, arising), (b) be baptized (an imperative), © wash away your sins (another imperative), and (d) calling on the name of the Lord (another participle). To make the verse teach baptism is necessary for salvation necessitates connecting parts two and three — be baptized and wash away. But rather than being connected to each other, each of those commands is actually connected with the participle. Arising is necessary before baptism and calling before sins can be wash[ed] away. Thus the verse should be read this way: *Arising, be baptized; washing away your sins, calling on the Lord.* The verse correctly understood does not teach baptismal regeneration.”⁹
- F.F. Bruce's translation: “Rise up, get yourself baptized and have your sins washed away calling on His name.”¹⁰
- The order is more-clearly revealed in the original setting (Acts 9)
 - ¹⁷ *And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and (1) laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and (2) be filled with the Holy Spirit."* ¹⁸ *Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and (3) he arose and was baptized.* (Acts 9:17-18)

5. Radical Evidence is Insufficient to Save

- Jesus: *Make hast and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me* (Acts 22:18).

- Paul, using logic and human reasoning, counters: *Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You.* ²⁰ *And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death . . .* (Acts 22:19-20).
 - It's as if Paul says, “my radical conversion provides irrefutable evidence of my truth claim!”
 - But: the issue is not one of evidence.
 - Paul has yet to learn the hard lesson: although logic/truth is an important element of evangelization, *unbelievers can not be saved solely by appealing to reason—a spiritual work is required!*
 - Logic and truth are *necessary*, but not *sufficient*.
- Jesus: *Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles* (Acts 22:21).
- Crowd: *And they listened to him [Paul] until this word . . .* (Acts 22:22)
 - Which word? **GENTILES**
- As Jesus informed Nicodemus, *Most assuredly (amen, amen), I say to you, unless one is born again¹¹, he cannot see the kingdom of God* (John 3:3).
- Later, when recounting these same events in Acts 26, Paul quotes Jesus and relates the spiritual nature of his work among mankind: ¹⁷ *I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,* ¹⁸ *to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.* (Acts 26:17–18)

6. Application

- Radical evidence is insufficient to save.

- Apologetics has a place, but has its limits.
- God is continually providing universal witness - general revelation (Psalm 19; Romans 1).
 - ¹ *The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. ² Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,* (Ps. 19:1-4)
- It's not about evidence: it's a matter of a sinful heart and blind eyes.
 - ²⁰ *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.* (Rom. 1:20-21)
- Salvation is a *supernatural event* requiring direct intervention by God.
 - It is equivalent to the largest-scale miracle you can conceive, akin to God's first spoken act: "Let there be light!"
 - To the individual being saved, it *seems* as if they come to a *reasoned* decision and *choose* God of their own initiative.
 - Scripture reveals otherwise. (Are you aware, in retrospect, of changes that transpired in your own life well in advance of the day of your salvation?)
- God's work among Gentiles—bringing them to Christ—is offensive to religious Jews.

- The idea that Israel, as God's chosen nation, and with all the historical advantages in knowing God (Romans 9:3-5), stumbled so severely to have called for the crucifixion of their own Messiah, is unthinkable—beyond the pale to consider as a historical reality.
- The idea that huge numbers of non-Jews, thousands of years after the crucifixion, thousands of miles away from Jerusalem, being cultural aliens to all things Jewish, would have the inside track on worshiping the Jewish Messiah (Rev. 2:9; 3:9) is *unthinkable!*

7. Closing Prayer

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Endnotes:

1. https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts_by_Tony_Garland/77_Acts_22_12-22/index.htm
2. Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
3. Ref-0617, #4741
4. προεξερίσατο [*proexeirisato*] from “προεξερίζομαι [*proxeirizomai*] - choose in advance, appoint beforehand”³
5. Ref-1562, 135

6. ⁷ . . . *Saul, why are you persecuting Me?* (Acts 22:7)
7. “For Wesley (and consequently for many Arminians) prevenient grace is the Holy Spirit’s work in the hearts of all people, which gives them the freedom to say yes to the gospel; thus prevenient grace can be accepted or rejected, but justification cannot be achieved without it.” Ref-1164, 95
8. ³ *For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,* ⁴ *though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:* ⁵ *circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;* ⁶ *concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* (Php. 3:3-6)
9. Ref-0098, 337
10. Ref-0100, Tape 20:A
11. ἄνωθεν [*anōthen*], “born from above”, NET

Sources:

- Ref-0098** Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Press, 1987).
- Ref-0100** Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Book of Acts (GB-325)* (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Theological Seminary, n.d.). [www.tyndale.edu].
- Ref-0617** James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).
- Ref-1164** Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999). ISBN:0-8308-1449-3^d.
- Ref-1562** Keith D. Stanglin, Thomas H. McCall, *Jacob Arminius: Theologian of Grace* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2012). ISBN:978-0-19-975567-7^e.

Links Mentioned Above

- a - See www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm.
- b - See <https://www.spiritandtruth.org>.
- c - See <mailto:contact@spiritandtruth.org>.

d - See <https://spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?0-8308-1449-3>.

e - See <https://spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-0-19-975567-7>.