

**11-14-21**

**Acts 22:1-21.**

The last time we saw Paul in the book of Acts he was in a bad way. He had returned from a 4-year missions' trip, preaching the gospel, and teaching the Word of God all along the way. He walked into a elders meeting, gave his report, and turned in the love offering collected from the Gentile churches. Resulting in everyone in the elder meeting glorifying God.

Then out came the new business. It had come to the elder boards attention that supposedly Paul was teaching all the Jews who were among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, circumcision, and Jewish customs. A plan was hatched, a thought on how to fix the rumors, and accusations, theater! Let us put on a show!

I am aware that my thoughts on the elder boards plan may not be popular, and I am okay with that. I don't believe their plan was the best way to have handled it. But Paul didn't protest it either. Paul went along with the plan, paid for four men to get a hair cut and give an offering, because the vow they took was over. Paul followed the plan, but the Jews from Asia, a group that had been a thorn in his flesh through all three of his missions' trip stirred up trouble. They hurled their accusations, assumptions and stirred up a crowd, which led to the mob beating Paul. Before the group could kill Paul, some roman soldiers come in and rescued, I mean arrest him. Not only was Paul being beaten for false reasons and on his way to jail, but he also finds out he was falsely identified, as an Egyptian assassin.

Now put yourself in Paul's situation. If it were me, I think I would have been relieved to be rescued by the Roman soldiers and let the Romans hightail me out of there as quickly as possible.

But Paul saw every circumstance as another opportunity to share about Jesus. Knowing the Jews probably would not do anything rash in the presence of heavily armed Roman guards, do you know what he did?

In this passage, Paul tells how he found Jesus. This is one of the places in Acts where Paul gives his personal testimony.

Did you find Jesus? That is a question that is a lot of time used as a way of making fun of someone.

Let's look at Paul's story today, and see how you or anyone you know can find Jesus:

We pick up today in **Acts 21:39-40.**

**I. PAUL DID NOT FIND JESUS THROUGH DEVOUT SINCERITY OR PASSION.**

- **Read Acts 22:1-5.**
- As far as religion and good works were concerned, Paul had all his ducks in a row.
- If there was anyone who trying to do right by God, it was Paul.
- He was born a Jew—God's chosen people. (The right side of the tracks, the right family)
- He was reared in Jerusalem, the center of God's dealings with mankind up to that time.
- He studied under the famous Gamaliel, the greatest teacher of the day and a disciple of the illustrious Hillel, one of the leading rabbis of the age.
- Paul said he was taught, "*according to the strictness of our fathers' law (perfect manner of God's Law,)*" that is, in the best school by the best teachers available. In other words, Paul went

to the Harvard of Judaism and was a trained rabbi, schooled in God's Law and in the rabbinic interpretation of the Law.

- Paul said he was zealous toward God. Derived from the Greek work *zelos*, to be zealous means to have an "ardor or fervor of spirit." There is an energy and an enthusiasm about one's faith. The believer is eager to "embrace, pursue, or defend" Jesus Christ in everything they do.
- Paul was sincere. Paul was so sincere that he was even willing to persecute others who dared to go against God's teachings as he understood them. That's a dangerous and destructive kind of sincerity, but it is sincerity.
- Sincerity and salvation are not the same thing. You may be very sincere—and never find Jesus. You can be intensely religious—but not have a relationship with God Himself.
- Many people believe that if you're sincere and try to do the best you can and treat people well and don't do anything seriously evil or wicked, like murdering or robbing someone, then God will let you into heaven.
- Others believe that if you go to church, obey the Bible as best as you understand it, live by the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments, surely THAT will get you into right standing with God.
- Paul is an example of a man who, according to the best of his knowledge, was as RELIGIOUS as he could be, as SINCERE as he could be and as DEVOUT as he knew how to be—and yet he was lost and without God in his life. It's another reminder in God's Word that our salvation is not earned by **OUR** goodness or **OUR** sincerity or **OUR** zeal but is received as a free gift by GOD'S grace.
- If there's anything you need to get out of this sermon, it's that **RELIGION** will not help you find Jesus; **SINCERITY** will not save you; **ZEAL** will not do it; **GOOD WORKS** are not enough; **BAPTISM** is insufficient; **TREATING OTHERS WELL** will not reserve a place for you in heaven; the **TEN COMMANDMENTS** cannot make you right with God; the **GOLDEN RULE** won't cancel God's judgment against your sin; and neither the CATHOLIC Church, nor the METHODIST Church, nor the BAPTIST Church—nor ANY church can reserve a place in heaven for you.
- Only JESUS can save you. Jesus Himself said without ambiguity: "**I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**" (John 14:6)
- You see, it's all about what Jesus did for us to provide our undeserved salvation, not what we do to earn it. As Paul said it in Titus 3:5 – "**Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us....**"

## II. PAUL FOUND JESUS IN THE MIDST OF HIS SINS.

- **Read verses 6-11.**
- Has there ever been a time when you realized you were guilty before a holy God and you came to the end of your self-effort and relying on your own goodness, and you trusted Christ to save you?
- Paul did. He realized his devout sincerity, passion and goodness did nothing to make him right with God.
- One day he was going about establishing his own righteousness, obeying his religious upbringing, being zealous of God, but ignorant of true salvation, and the next day—he was a humbled, repentant, obedient, changed believer.
- One day he was LOST, though he didn't know it—the next, he was FORGIVEN FROM ALL HIS SINS.

- One day he was on the road to hell—the next, he had eternal life with God.
- One day he was THE PERSECUTOR—the next, he had JOINED THE RANKS OF THE PERSECUTED.
- Being saved, born-again, which means having your sins forgiven and being put into a right relation with God—is not a process—it is an experience, an event, a turning point, where a new process begins.
- Jesus said, **“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)**
- Have you had a salvation/born-again experience? If not, you can today.

### III. FINDING JESUS CHANGES EVERYTHING!

- **Read verses 12-21.**
- Paul’s vision was changed. He went from seeing red, desiring to rid the world of Christians, to standing in the presence of a Christian receiving new sights.
- Paul’s life and calling changed. He was a zealous Pharisee to a believer. I have stated it before, it changed everything. His job changed, his friends changed, his purpose changed, his hearts desires changed.
- Paul started down the road to Damascus with one set of orders, to only find Jesus and get new orders. **Verses 14-15, “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.’”**
- Paul had to learn to follow a new master over his life. His ideas and plans for his new life might not follow God’s plans. He had to submit.

### Conclusion

If you can’t find Jesus by being religious; if living a good life does not give a person eternal life; if religious works, like baptism or communion do not save us from sin, then how can ANYBODY be saved?” I’m glad you asked.

**2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For he [God] hath made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”**

When Jesus bore your sin and my sin on the cross, He became the embodiment of sin and God poured out all His judgment of our sin upon His son. He, the sinless Savior, became sin for us that we might have forgiveness.

**John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”**

God loved you so much, he sent His son to become sin for you; to die on the cross for you; to pay your penalty before God in your place. God did His part; so, what part do you have? —Only one thing: **BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST** and you will have everlasting life. To “believe” in the Bible does not mean to simply believe facts about Jesus. It means to “trust; rely on; rest in.”

Today, if you will just bow your head and acknowledge that you are a sinner, guilty before God, and tell God that you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone and what He did for you on the cross, the Bible promises that you'll be born again, which means to be born into God's family and become one of His children and have eternal life heaven.

If you'll do that, you will find Jesus. "Did you find Jesus is all wrong: Jesus never was lost to begin with. You and I are the ones who are lost. But one day I turned from sin and trusted Christ as my Savior and found Jesus. And if you'll trust in Jesus too, you can sing with John Newton, "I once was lost, but now I'm found; 'twas blind, but now I see."

***Amazing grace, How sweet the sound***

***That saved a wretch like me.***

***I once was lost, but now I am found,***

***Was blind, but now I see.***