**The Making of a Man**

**Acts 21:37-22:29, Sunday AM, December 11, 2022**

**Prelude – Scripture:** Acts 21:37-22:29 As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, “May I say something to you?” And he said, “Do you know Greek? 38 “Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?” 39 But Paul said, “I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people.” 40 When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying, 1 “Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now *offer* to you.” 2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said, 3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. 4 “I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, 5 as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished. 6 “But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, 7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ 8 “And I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.’ 9 “And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. 10 “And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.’ 11 “But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus. 12 “A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, *and* well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing near said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very time I looked up at him. 14 “And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. 15 ‘For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16 ‘Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’ 17 “It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, 18 and I saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.’ 19 “And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. 20 ‘And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.’ 21 “And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’ ” 22 They listened to him up to this statement, and *then* they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!” 23 And as they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air, 24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way. 25 But when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?” 26 When the centurion heard *this,* he went to the commander and told him, saying, “What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman.” 27 The commander came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman?” And he said, “Yes.” 28 The commander answered, “I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money.” And Paul said, “But I was actually born *a citizen.*” 29 Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains.

Wow! So much for seeking to keep the peace between the Jewish and Gentile believers. A riot is an understatement as they spread “news” that this great Saul/Paul teaches against the law, the Jewish people, and the temple AND has dishonored the temple by bringing Greeks into the temple. Because this is “TRUTH,” their holy indignation leads to dragging Paul from the temple to kill him, stopped in the middle of beating him only because of a Roman commander and a couple of centurions and their soldiers. But he still is placed in chains though they can’t get an answer concerning his “crime” because of the mob, so out of control that Paul is carried to the safety of the barracks. And what does Paul do? He asks the commander for permission to defend himself before the angry, violent mob! Is this bravery OR craziness? Look farther—look deeper/higher. What drives Paul? Where is he looking? Start with mission—He was commissioned to proclaim the gospel, to bear Christ’s name “before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.” (Acts 9:15) You think you heard this intro to worship before? You have, because Pastor Jahn wanted to look at this passage again and focus on another part. What does it mean to meditate on God’s Word? To turn something around again so that see what you saw, but then see something else—NOT for novelty, but because it IS there. Pastor Jahn wants to focus on the change in Paul. For example, why is Paul so determined even in the face of a hostile audience? Among other reasons, chiefly because of the God who pursued him while he was breathing out murderous threats against followers of Jesus. Having been confronted, brought low, brought near, and recommissioned, he follows in His Master’s steps with the heart of the Master for dangerous lost souls. For you to glorify God as you listen and apply today, you too must have had a meeting with God that leaves you NOT merely focused on what you get from God, but on the majesty of who He is! Worship the newborn King!

**\*Hymn (Powerpoint): Joy Has Dawned**

Encountering God’s power, love, and justice as a recipient of His glorious gift of reconciliation leads to a life welcoming God’s continued work to expose and change your heart even while He uses your changing heart to serve Him. So remember what Paul tells this angry mob in his defense? His testimony. For all of Paul’s fear of God and upbringing, he didn’t see Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Son of God. But once blinded by God and then made to see, He saw enough to not only submit, but to proclaim again and again without shame the gospel of Jesus Christ. Meditate on the incarnation and worship.

**\*Hymn #155: Once in Royal David’s City \*Pastoral Prayer: Pastor Jahn Choir: The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy Scripture:** Luke 1:57–80 Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her. 59 And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father. 60 But his mother answered and said, “No indeed; but he shall be called John.” 61 And they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name.” 62 And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. 63 And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, “His name is John.” And they were all astonished. 64 And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue *loosed,* and he *began* to speak in praise of God. 65 Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea. 66 All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, “What then will this child *turn out to* be?” For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him. 67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: 68 “Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant— 70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old— 71 Salvation from our enemies, And from the hand of all who hate us; 72 To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, 73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, 74 To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. 76 “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; 77 To give to His people *the* knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, 78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, 79 To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace.” 80 And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

**Offering: \*Doxology:**

The Virgin Mary had a baby boy! No, really? O YES believer! Who would listen? Who would be excited? One prepared by God to believe. Paul, gripped by the trustworthiness and mercy of God, tells ALL to these accusing him INCLUDING the part that would make them upset BECAUSE he must tell the truth, the whole truth! This shows God as majestic, praiseworthy because there is always more. Did you hear Zechariah’s response to the baby? He did not merely see a miracle, he saw this miracle in the larger picture of God mercifully caring for His people according to His Word. Don’t merely focus on the baby in the manger, worship the God of the incarnation. Come and Worship Come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King!

**\*Hymn #131: Angels From the Realms of Glory**

The same God who had earlier protected him when praying in the temple of Jerusalem by telling him to escape would now protect him from this mob AND from the devices of the Roman soldiers. Think what confidence this brings when you see glimpses of God’s greatness and can trust Him, even when you don’t feel like you will ever be able to be like Paul. As pastor preaches about God’s work to change Saul, ask God to shape and change you as you yield to Him.

**\*Hymn (Powerpoint): O Come, All You Unfaithful**

**Message: The Making of a Man Acts 21:37-22:29 \*Hymn #372: Living for Jesus Prayer**