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HOW THE HAND OF GOD GUIDED THE STEPS OF PAUL

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 111
ACTS 22:12-21

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ACTS 22:12-21 "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. 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. 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 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 raimen of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

Ananias represents for us the dynamics of the ordinary Christian life. He was called on to do a job for the Lord and he was prepared to do it. He lived in the Church Age and therefore, he was in full-time Christian service. In our last study we studied the ordinary life. Here we read that Ananias was a devout man according to the law. At the time Ananias lived the New Testament was being prepared but was not available to him, however, he had the Old Testament Scriptures. Therefore, in Old Testament times God gave additional information through dreams and trances and through direct conversation with men. Now in 96 A.D. when the New Testament Canon was completed these special revelations through dreams and trances and special messages ended and have never been revived or repeated. In other words, when you have the Canon of Scripture in complete form, this is the complete message and you don't need any additional information. People who claim to have direct communication with God and who claim they have received supernatural revelation are apostate and their claims are false. All God wants us to know is recorded in Scripture. During the apostolic period, the period covered by the book of the Acts up until 96 A.D. when the Canon of Scripture was completed, the ordinary Christian had to depend on Old Testament Scripture. So it is quite natural that in this apostolic age, God spoke directly to Ananias. Ananias studied Old Testament Scripture, was a devout man and was exactly the right one to receive this message from God about Saul of Tarsus.

The principle is this--God uses ordinary people who are prepared. God always uses the prepared man. Ananias was a faithful witness among the people and his reputation among the believers was the very highest.

ACTS 22:13 "Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him," Here is God's message to Ananias concerning Saul. There is nothing in Old Testament Scripture that told Ananias about this. This information came from a conversation the Lord had with him, and therefore, this information is on the par with sacred Scripture. Note that Ananias calls

him "Brother Saul". Ananias believed exactly what God said to him about Saul. The words "Receive thy sight" are from "Ana blepo" and it is an aorist, active, imperative and actually means "Look up". So Ananias said, "Brother Saul, look up!".

ACTS 22:14 "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." "The God Of Our Fathers" is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the founder of the Jewish race. The words "Hath chosen thee" are some of the most interesting words in the New Testament. "Chosen" comes from "Procheirizomai" and means "to take by the hand before hand". In other words Saul was pre-appointed by God. Now Saul had a family background that made him a legalist, but when Christ proclaimed the truth to him on the Damascus Road he believed it. God chose Saul to this work. God knew millions of years before that time how he would respond, and God picked him up and made him the greatest believer of all times. God did not choose Saul contrary to Saul's will, but God chose him on the basis of his perfect knowledge. So God told Ananias that Saul was going to become Paul and be his great servant. God literally took Saul of Tarsus by the hand in eternity past and prepared him for his work. God prepared a life plan for Saul, knowing that he would be converted and would respond to God's great plan for his life. God knew every step Paul would ever take so God prepared him for every phase of his life. Now this is what the word "Chosen" means here in this verse. God's plan for Paul does not include God's coercion of Paul's free will. This is always true of every servant of the Lord. Now get ready for something that may shock you. God provided many things by his grace that Paul never used. Paul was great, but he was not perfect and he didn't exhaust the grace of God. Paul, like so many of us, didn't use all that the grace of God provided. Even though temporarily Paul had gotten out of the geographical will of God, God continued to care for him and would eventually bring him back into complete fellowship.

Right at that very moment as Paul stood before that mob, God was protecting him and caring for him. God even provided for Paul's negative volition and even though Paul failed many times, the Lord never failed Paul once. Now what was true of Paul is true of us also. God knew Paul would get out of fellowship, and God provided rebound. So Romans 8:28 applied to Paul and it applies to us also. God treated Paul with grace and he treats us the same way. Paul is a perfect example of grace provision. Paul got out of the operational will of God in Jerusalem, and God had to discipline him for it, yet at the very same time God provided for his every need and never forsook him. After Paul's rebound, after he was back in the will of God, some of the greatest accomplishments of his life were recorded. Now that is what is meant here when God said to Ananias of Paul, "God hath chosen thee". In the opinion of many, the Book of Ephesians is the greatest thing Paul ever wrote, and he wrote that book after this Jerusalem mob experience. God makes provision for the alternatives as well as for the things he had originally planned for us, and all this is done through the love of God.

The purpose of all this was so that Paul could know God's will for his life. You see, you learn the will of God by learning doctrine. You can not know the will of God unless you know the Word of God. This was true of Paul and this is true of us.

To "see the just one" is a phrase that means a panoramic view. It is from "Horao" and means a long loving look. In other words, God is saying to Paul that he was going to have a long loving look at Jesus Christ. Christ did appear to Paul at least four times--once at the time of his conversion (Acts 9:6), the second time in Arabia (Acts 20:24 and 26:17), the third time in the Temple in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18) and the fourth time in the prison (Acts 23:11). So when it says that he will see the just one it means a long loving look. Now we can have the same panoramic view of God by learning Bible doctrine, him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith. "Hear his voice" means that Paul will receive from the Lord a message of Bible doctrine and would be able to write it down for the world to read.

ACTS 22:15 "For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard." This verse tells of Paul's great worldwide work. Paul was to be in the future a witness that would be "Seen and heard". This means that in the future years Paul would see and hear much doctrinal truth and be able to give a doctrinal message to the world.

ACTS 22:16 "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Here is a very interesting verse, but to know the real meaning we must straighten out the translation as we have it here.

As this verse now stands you would think that in order to be a Christian you would need to tarry, to rise up, to be baptized for the remission of sins, and then to call on the name of the Lord. Let's get the proper order out of this verse.

"Epi kaleo" is the word for calling on the name of the Lord. It is an aorist participle and an aorist participle always comes before the main verb in a Greek sentence. Now the main verb here is "wash away thy sins" but you call on the name of the Lord, you believe before your sins are washed away. And this is exactly what this verse says. Back there on the Damascus Road Paul had called on the name of the Lord when he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" So this verse should read like this--"Having called on the name of the Lord, your sins were washed away. Now stop hanging around here, rise up, and be baptized".

So here we have a very mixed up sentence until we know the real meaning of this language. The Bible at no place ever says that you have to be baptized to have your sins washed away. The Bible is consistent and always says that your sins are washed away by having faith in Christ. No one would ever be able to get baptismal regeneration out of a verse like this if he just understood its true meaning.

The truth about this experience is this--In a moment of time on the Damascus Road, Paul called on the name of the Lord, and in that moment his sins were washed away. When he got up from the dust of that experience he was saved. When he was led, blind and confused into Damascus, he was already saved. When Ananias had the conversation with him, he was already saved. Now Ananias is simply saying to him--Since you have already believed in Christ and your sins have been washed away, stop hanging around here, get up and be baptized. This is always the order--baptism always follows salvation and is no part of salvation. It never has been a part of salvation and it never can be.

"Be baptized" in this verse is water baptism. The proper sequence is this--believe and then be baptized. It is an aorist, active, imperative and means in a point of time after your conversion you are to be baptized. You must be baptized for yourself, no one can substitute for you. The imperative mood means that it is a command from God.

Paul's baptism was a physical act to show that his old life was dead and that he was now launching out into a new life to do the will of God. Soon after this Paul will escape from Damascus in a basket over the wall. A little later in Jerusalem they will try to kill him and God will warn him to escape. He had spent three years in Arabia to get his theology straightened out so he could be the great missionary to the Gentile world.

So the only public thing that happened to Paul was his baptism. The conversion was a private inner experience, and the silent years of training and preparation was a private undertaking in his own mind. To be sure the Devil would fight Paul all he could, for the Devil did not want Paul to learn the Word of God.

In his testimony here to this mob, Paul doesn't tell all the details. Right here he skips over the escape from Damascus over the wall in a basket, and he skips the three years of intensive study in the Arabian desert. He came immediately to the trance he had in the Temple there in Jerusalem.

ACTS 22:17 "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" Paul gave this incident for he knew it was the part of the story they would need to hear. He told them that while he was praying he fell into a "trance". Now the word for trance is "Ekstasis" and is the word from which we get ecstasies.

ACTS 22:18 "And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." Notice he said, "Saw him". Here is one of those times when Paul saw Jesus Christ. And Jesus said to Paul "Make haste", in other words, hurry up and get out of Jerusalem. Those who would not hear testimony from Paul at that time were the legalistic believers and the Jewish Sanhedrin.

ACTS 22:19-20 "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." You can almost hear Paul rationalizing with the Lord so he could stay in Jerusalem for he loved it so much. Well, the Lord knew all that and Paul didn't need to tell him what he already knew. Paul was actually arguing with the Lord about remaining in Jerusalem.

ACTS 22:21 "And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." So the Lord said to Paul, "Get up and get out of here right now". Then Paul said that the Lord told him to go far hence unto the Gentiles. Now when he said the word "Gentiles" the mob rose up again in bitter rebellion.