



# SERMON NOTES

US N°. 122

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Title: There but for the grace of God go I

#31 in the Series on the Acts of the Apostles

1. Paul speaks to the mob (cf. Acts 22:1-22)
  - a. *"I'm not so different from you..."* (cf. Acts 22:1-10)
    - i. *"Brothers and fathers..."* in Aramaic; links himself with the crowd.
    - ii. Paul's message is clear, *"I understand why you have attacked me. I was once an attacker also. I understand where you are coming from."* Paul had been a Christian for more than twenty years, but he could still relate to those who were not Christians. Paul wanted them to know that he still served the God of his fathers. He had not rejected Judaism, but many in Judaism had rejected God as revealed in Jesus Christ. It is as if Paul said: *"I was just like you all, until I had an encounter with Jesus. Jesus met me and my life was dramatically changed."*
    - iii. Identify with those we seek to minister to; Phil. 2:5-8, *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."*
  - b. Meeting Jesus and the call to go to the Gentiles. (cf. Acts 22:11-22)
    - i. But for the grace of God... 1 Cor. 15:10, *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."*
    - ii. Jesus speaks to Paul in a trance at the temple in Jerusalem; Acts 22:18, 21, *"Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me... Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles."*
      1. This word from Jesus may have been a surprise to Paul, because, he probably thought of himself as the perfect one to bring the gospel to his fellow Jews. Nevertheless, Jesus gave him this warning, even telling him to make haste.
      2. Paul makes it clear – this was God's plan, not his.
      3. A man who prays in the Temple is less likely to desecrate it.
      4. Salvation is by grace through faith for all.
        - a. Gen. 12:3, *"I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*
        - b. Mt. 28:19-20, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..."*

- c. Eph. 2:8-9, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."*
- iii. Paul objects; Acts 22:19-20, *"So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. 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."*
  - 1. Paul thought his early, energetic persecution of the church gave him more credibility with the Jewish people who were against Christianity. He tried to explain to Jesus why he should really stay in Jerusalem and work to tell the Jewish people about Jesus.
    - a. God does not call the equipped (qualified), He equips (qualifies) the called. Phil 1:6, *"being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ..."* and Is. 6:8, *"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.'"*
    - b. 1 Cor. 10:13, *"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."*
- iv. Devout Ananias; Paul's divine commission had been recognized by a devout Jew.
- c. The mob listened carefully up to this point. In their minds, they didn't mind this talk about Jesus, but they could not stand the idea that God might save Jews and Gentiles alike and in the same way. They became outraged at the thought that God's salvation could be given freely to believing Gentiles. This outraged, violent response was over one word: *"Gentiles."*
  - i. The Jews of that day did not have a problem with Gentiles becoming Jews, but they were incredibly offended at the thought of Gentiles becoming Christians just as Jews became Christians, coming to God on the same terms.
  - ii. Jews in Christianity did not see themselves as converts, whereas the Gentiles did, but not a conversion to Judaism. How do you become a convert to the Jewish Messiah without becoming Jewish.
  - iii. Pride & Prejudice are stumbling blocks to the Gospel.
- 2. Paul's Roman citizenship established; (cf. Acts 22:23-30)
  - a. The Roman commander saw Paul passionately address this huge crowd in a language he didn't know. He watched as the crowd listened in rapt attention, then it suddenly erupted into a riot.
  - b. From now until the end of the Book of Acts, Paul will be in Roman custody. As far as Luke is concerned, this was the end of his time as a free man, though not the end of his witness or his usefulness to God and God's people.
  - c. *"The verbal claim to Roman citizenship was accepted at face value; penalties for falsifying documents and making false claims of citizenship were exceedingly stiff - Epictetus speaks of death for such acts."* (Longenecker)

- i. *“How the citizenship was acquired by Paul’s father or grandfather we have no means of knowing, but analogy would suggest that it was for valuable services rendered to a Roman general or administrator in the southeastern area of Asia Minor.”* (Bruce)
    - ii. Paul was an extremely rare individual as it would have been uncommon to find such an educated, intelligent, devout Jew who was also a Roman citizen. God uses Paul’s unique background to use Paul in a special way; even as He wants to use our unique background to use us in a special way – if we are willing.
  - d. Use of a bit of sarcasm by the commander, *“I had to pay...”* Paul being born with citizenship suggests that his father (or grandfather) had done something worth rewarding by a Roman General and places Paul on the same social step as the Commander.
    - i. The state is appointed and armed with the sword in order that they might 1) punish evil and 2) condone good. Rom. 13:13-14, *“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.”*
  - e. Luke presents the Roman commander as a fair and upstanding man. Though he did not know the details of the dispute between Paul and the religious leaders, he seemed to work hard towards a fair resolution. His integrity in subordinating his methods of interrogation to the laws of Rome is an admirable quality.
    - i. He persists in his pursuit to know the certain facts of the case, just as we ought to.
3. Take aways
- a. Identify with those you’re ministering to.
  - b. Salvation is free for all through faith by grace.
  - c. Do not allow pride and prejudice to create hindrances or stumbling blocks.
  - d. God doesn’t always do it the way we would like or are comfortable with, but never more than we can carry.
  - e. Role of the State.