

## Acts 22

**Good morning church. So very good to be with you – for those able to join us in person and those that find it necessary due to COVID to stay home.** This morning, where we find ourselves in the book of Acts – I want us to think through the word blueprint.

Kids – any of you know what a blue print is? Plans. Right. Can any of you think of something you're going to find on the blueprints? All kinds of stuff right? Blueprints tell a builder what to build, how to build, where the wires go, where the plumbing goes, where the elevator goes, etc. All kinds of stuff on a blueprint.

What do blueprints have to do with Acts 22? Great question. Where we are in the book of Acts, Paul has to give this defense of himself in front of a bunch of people that wanted to kill him. And as he does, we can use his defense as a blueprint of sorts for sharing Jesus with others.

Remember last week there was this dude named Agabus that warned Paul about going up to Jerusalem – Any of you remember if Paul stayed with them or decided to go? Right – He decided to Go. Wasn't even a decision. Not like that 80's song '*Should I Stay or Should I Go*', Paul had already decided to follow Jesus regardless of the cost. Remember – Paul knew what God had called him to, and he was going to do it.

And we know, in Acts 21 – that shortly after he got there – it says “The whole city was stirred up, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul, Dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut.”

They wanted to kill him. Because of the Gospel that he was preaching, they wanted to kill him. They bound him with chains and were taking him to the barracks. And Paul says “Am I allowed to say something to you?” This question he asks to the commander, and then again in V39 he says “Now I ask you, **let me speak to the people.**”

What I would say to you, the pre-requisite if you will for sketching out our blueprint is a willingness to SPEAK.

### 1. Willingness to Speak

What we know of the apostle Paul is that his ministry is marked with boldness. Not arrogance, or false confidence, but a rock solid understanding of who he is in Christ, what he's been called to do, and a boldness to ACT on it. There was this willingness to speak that he had – never one to miss an opportunity to point people to the glory of King Jesus.

It's one thing to have an opportunity – it's another thing to take the opportunity. Some of you may remember a small group book we went through, maybe 2 years ago. And one of the takeaways was a way to pray – for the **opportunity** to share Jesus, the **wisdom** to see and the **courage** to take it.

Last week we saw in Acts 21 Paul's claim that he was willing to die for Jesus – now Paul's conviction would be tested. He's asking for an opportunity to speak – and he has a choice to make. He can focus on trying to save his own neck, or he can point them to Jesus. But as we know about Paul – he's not concerned with saving his own neck – whether he lives or dies – he won't be silenced – he will point people to Jesus.

And his starting point is **Who He Was.**

### 2. Who Paul Was

Read Acts 21:1-5

“Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense before you.”<sup>2</sup> When they heard that he was addressing them in Aramaic,<sup>[a]</sup> they became even quieter.<sup>3</sup> He continued, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strictness of our ancestral law. I was zealous for God, just as all of you are today.<sup>4</sup> I persecuted this Way to the death, arresting and putting both men and women in jail,<sup>5</sup> as both the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. After I received letters from them to the brothers, I traveled to Damascus to arrest those who were there and bring them to Jerusalem to be punished.

Paul was a 5\* Jew. Well educated by a leading Rabbi. And there was (past tense) a zeal for God. He thought the way he was living was in accordance with God’s plan. He was passionate. Don’t miss this though – especially the kids – **you can be super passionate about something and be DEAD wrong at the same time.** And he was so opposed to the Christian movement that he actively and aggressively pursued them, trying to have them arrested and punished and even killed for their faith in Jesus.

See Paul had a story. And he doesn’t back away from who he was. He doesn’t try and explain away who he was. He owns it. He doesn’t try and minimize who he was – instead he throws it out there. What I would tell you this morning, **each of us that have turned from our sin and are trusting in Jesus has a story.** A history. That first line on our blueprint of sharing Jesus with others is to understand who you were before you met Jesus.

For some – it’s as straightforward as being raised in a Christian home, hearing the gospel of Jesus at a young age, and responding to it. And not really knowing what it’s like to not be a follower of Jesus.

For others, it may be chasing the world and all that it offered – money, pleasure, whatever – and then I met Jesus. Yet for others it may be I thought I was a good person – didn’t cheat on my wife, worked hard at my job – but never knew Jesus.

I can’t fill in the blanks of your story – but what I can tell you is that everyone of us has a story.

Paul, as he stands speaking to defend himself – he started with who he was before he met Jesus, and then he turns from who he was to who he met.

### **3. Who Paul Met**

Read 22:6-10

<sup>6</sup> “As I was traveling and approaching Damascus, about noon an intense light from heaven suddenly flashed around me. <sup>7</sup> I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’

<sup>8</sup> “I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

“He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, the one you are persecuting.’ <sup>9</sup> Now those who were with me saw the light,<sup>[b]</sup> but they did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me.

<sup>10</sup> “I said, ‘What should I do, Lord?’

“The Lord told me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything that you have been assigned to do.’

See Paul, in very dramatic fashion, meets Jesus and everything changes for him. **Everything changes when we meet Jesus.** If you are a Christian – if you have turned from your sin and are trusting in Jesus – your story of meeting Jesus is every bit as dramatic as Paul’s. And I say this – not that you got a vision and were blinded – but I say this in that God, the author of salvation, takes people dead in their sin, and gives them new life through Jesus. Real, purposeful, meaningful life – so much so that our lives are radically different and never the same again. That’s incredibly dramatic, whether it happens at age 7, 17, 77, 97 or at any age. **The climactic moment is that as God saves people** – he gives them life. Meaningful life, right now, and forever life with Jesus when we breathe our last breath.

Not only was Paul willing to speak, sharing who we was, but highlighting who he met – Paul also knew that he was sent.

#### **4. Where Paul was sent**

Read 22:11-16

<sup>11</sup> “Since I couldn’t see because of the brightness of the light,<sup>[a]</sup> I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and went into Damascus. <sup>12</sup> Someone named Ananias, a devout man according to the law, who had a good reputation with all the Jews living there,<sup>13</sup> came and stood by me and said, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight.’ And in that very hour I looked up and saw him. <sup>14</sup> And he said, ‘The God of our ancestors has appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the words from his mouth, <sup>15</sup> since you will be a witness for him to all people of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup> And now, why are you delaying? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’

See, so many of us – hear me – so many of us miss this. I’ve at times missed this, and I’m sure there are ways in which I’m missing it right now. But hear me – to be a Christian is to be sent on a mission.

The purpose of Paul’s salvation was to carry the Gospel to the nations, plant churches, declare the greatness of Jesus all of the middle east, and by the way write a bunch of books of the Bible. You and I – we don’t have that same purpose – but everyone who calls on the name of Jesus, everyone who has been saved by the grace and mercy of God through Christ – everyone of us has a purpose.

One of the saddest things that I’ve seen as a Christian and as a pastor is **purposelessness** among the people in the church. Purposelessness. There are thousands of people sitting in churches right now all over this city – that think the whole extent of their Christian faith is a ticket to heaven when they die and to come to church a couple of times a month, throwing a few bucks in the plate when they pass the collection. Maybe even some here this morning or with us online.

And while they may be Christians, they are missing the purpose for which they were saved – namely to point people everywhere to Jesus – all kinds of people – that they come into contact with. The way we shape this purpose as a church is to **share and show Jesus with every family** in our community one family at a time.

See...Paul knew where he was sent. We need to know where we’ve been sent. How do you start? Who are you in friendships with, or developing meaningful relationships with, that don’t know Jesus. Family, friends, work colleagues, neighbors, whatever – this is the starting point. Where God has sent you. Not to earn a paycheck or to share good food – but to declare the greatness of God’s grace to others.

Once we know where we’ve been sent, we need to determine **How I will go and share. And then once we know the how – it’s time to take action. Do something.**

As we think through Paul's blueprint – how he stands before people that wanted to kill him – as he shares how Jesus saved him – there's a lot that we can apply today to our own lives. A couple of just really important reminders:

- Jesus is the hero of Paul's story and needs to be the hero of our stories
- Paul's story emphasizes the grace of God, not the greatness of Paul
- Paul's confidence was in God, not his own abilities
  - For us – our confidence is in the message – not our own abilities – and the God who has created this message.

## **CLOSING**