

Acts 22: 16-22; “Learning to Do God’s Will”, Sermon # 82 in the series –
“Laying the Foundations”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on September 18th, 2022, in the Morning Worship Service.

The last time that we were together around this passage, I preached to you about Paul’s giving his testimony to the mob that was trying to kill him. In that message I showed you some of the things that you should remember to include in your testimony, such as, telling people what your life was like before you were saved. And also telling people about how you found the light of Christ. Now today, I want to share with you more about what you should do glorify Christ with your life following your conversion. What are the first steps of obedience? 1st – If you have believed in Christ, you should be baptized. 2nd – After you have believed you should call upon His name, to better understand His will for you in particular. Let’s see how we can grow together through receiving this message, in relation to the things that Christ would have us personally to do.

1st of all – If you have believed in Christ, you should be baptized.

It will be good for us now to consider that the testimony of each Christian is different in regard to what Christ would have you personally to do. Each Christian believes in the same gospel concerning Christ. But each Christian’s conversion will be different from others based upon the circumstances of how they came to know the Lord, and what the Lord has called them to do personally for Him. We can see this if we will look at the difference between Paul and this man Ananias. In verses 12 and 13, it says – “Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, “Brother Saul, receive your sight.” “And at that same hour I looked up at him.”

This man Ananias had a good testimony with all of the Jews, even following his conversion to Christ. Paul did not have a good testimony with many people following his conversion because he had been a persecutor of Christians before he was saved. And he really did not have a good testimony before the unconverted Jews afterwards; that is from their standpoint. You should be able to see the difference between these two men immediately. Paul although he was zealous for the law before he was saved, he was not called “devout”. Ananias is called that here.

That word “devout” if you will remember, was also used of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, officially called and brought into the Church in Caesarea because of Peter’s preaching to him according to the will and purpose of God. It says in verse 2 of chapter 10 of Acts that he was a “devout man” and all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.” A devout person is one who is given to engaging in the holy exercises of their religion, in both mind and heart and their actions. God is pleased with that devotion when you know Him personally as your Savior and Lord.

In Cornelius’ case, his devotion before he came to Christ, was a tribute to God’s common grace at work in his mind and his heart. That common grace (his being devout before his conversion to Christ) was purposed by God in the giving of it, to lead Cornelius step by step, according to the vision that was given to him by an angel, to be able to hear the gospel from Peter’s lips, and to be saved; he and his whole household. Having common grace does not mean that you will automatically come to know the Lord, even if you are hearing the gospel on a regular basis. God is sovereign in terms of His giving of common grace to people, just as much as He is in His giving of special saving grace to certain people.

And so we will see that some people are very religious in a right way, both before they hear the gospel and are saved, and afterwards. I believe that this is what Ananias was like, too, from what we read here. There are some people who are very religious in a wrong way before they hear the

gospel and are saved, even as Paul was before he was saved. That is what the difference was between Ananias and Saul, who became the apostle Paul. Ananias had a good testimony it says here, with all the Jews who dwelt there at Damascus. He was the right man to have spoken to Saul when he was first converted. He knew the Lord well, and he knew what he should say to Saul at that very time, which was – 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. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.

And then he immediately followed this up by saying to Saul – And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord. This was the very next thing that Christ would have Saul to do, following his learning who His Lord was, and what His will was, that he would be this great witness to all men. It was, that he should arise and be baptized. Baptism, as we see here, and everywhere in the New Testament scriptures, is for those who have believed in Christ and the gospel concerning Him. It is the believer's publicly identifying themselves with Christ, having believed in His finished work of perfect righteousness and His death on the cross.

It is confessing that He is raised from the dead, and has done a similar work in your heart, of raising you from your death in trespasses and sins. Biblical baptism is not meant for infants whose parents have taken them to church and had the minister baptize them by sprinkling or pouring. It is for those making public profession of Christ in front of the church, or before a God-called representative of the church. The purpose in engaging in this church ordinance is that you would publicly declare your faith in Christ before witnesses, and publicly portray outwardly what Christ has done for you inwardly; that is, that you would wash away your sins in the waters of baptism.

Now, by faith, when you first believe, you should understand the truth of what has actually happened in your heart. Christ has washed away your sins in His precious blood when you called upon His name. This is stated for us in Revelation chapter 1, verses 5 and 6. "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever." "Amen." Who has done this great thing for you, in your soul? Christ has. And it was by His fulfilling His earthly ministry in all righteousness on your behalf, that He made you one of His kings and priests unto His God and Father.

You are recognized as such by the Father on account of Christ's work. And you are given the Holy Spirit who caused you to be born again. And you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we see here in the verse that we are studying, that Christ would have us to actively comply with, (to actively and publicly recognize) His glorious work that He has really and actually done for us, so that we would show forth His having saved us. And that is why you should be willing to go into the waters of baptism.

When you are lowered down into the water you are showing that you were buried with Christ in your spiritual baptism, unto death. You are identifying personally and publicly with His great work for you and in you. It is the picture of your having really and actually died to sin in your heart because of the Spirit's working. Your being raised up from the water pictures the fact that you will be living to righteousness, now that you have believed. The question for each person here today, is, if you have you have believed in Christ, have you been baptized with water baptism?

For in being baptized with water baptism, it publicly declares your having taking Christ as your Savior and Lord. You are publicly declaring before the gathered church that He is your Savior and Lord. You may give your testimony publicly to those gathered, and they will bear witness to what you say. You have believed in Christ, and you now intend to follow Christ in

newness of life. Romans chapter 6, verse 4 – “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life.” I have baptized a few people here in this church over the years and invariably I will ask them two things at their baptism. 1st – Have you taken Jesus Christ to be your only Savior from sin, and as Your Lord to rule over you? And 2nd – Is it your desire and purpose to be His disciple, to follow Him and to walk with Him in newness of life. If these two questions can be answered in the affirmative, then I baptize that person in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

To wash away your sins in the waters of baptism is not the act that saves you. It is the act which shows forth the fact that Christ has already washed away your sins in His blood. And the Father and the Son have given you the Spirit, to seal you for the Day of Redemption, the Day of Christ’s Coming Again. At that time, He will personally complete your redemption by raising you and all believers from dead. The redemption of your body will take place, and you will be glorified at that time.

Romans 6: 5 – “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection...” Sometimes believes do not get baptized after they are saved. That is not a good thing. For how is Christ glorified in this? Why do you wait? Arise my brother, arise my sister, and wash away your sins. Respond in obedience to Christ’s command. Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved. He who does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16: 15 & 16)

2nd – After you have believed you should call upon His name.

Now, at the end of verse 16 Ananias says to Paul – “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” So Paul called upon the name of the Lord at the time of his baptism in water on that day. He no doubt called upon the Lord, to ask him to help him to live up to all of the grace that he had been shown and his appointment to serve Christ as a minister and an apostle. He gave thanks for the Lord’s having saved him. And he prayed that the Lord would help him in the days to come to be filled with wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of His will, so that he would be able to be an able minister of Christ.

But I want you to see that this was not simply a one-time calling upon the name of the Lord. Prayer became Paul’s regular practice, as it should become yours and mine. It says in verse 17 – “Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.’” Paul was praying when he returned to Jerusalem. It was when he was praying in the temple, and in a trance, receiving Divine Revelation from Christ Himself, that he heard these words, that he should make haste and get out of Jerusalem.

Do you pray for direction in your living your Christian life? I want to speak to you now for a few minutes about how Christ speaks to us. I think that many young Christians are not aware that Christ does not speak personally and audibly to you, as he did here with Paul. Paul was an apostle of our Lord, and as such, he was going to be receiving direct audible communication from Christ. He had already seen the Lord at the time of his conversion on the road to Damascus, and heard his voice at that time. Our God and our Christ ordained that this would take place in just this way.

But you and I are not living in the times of the apostles, the times when Christ gave revelatory gifts to men to speak His word, and heal people, and cast out demons, and when they spoke in tongues. The giving of those gifts, and this direct audible speaking of Christ with His brethren, ceased when the apostle John left the scene. This is very important that you, as a new believer, or a young believer, should understand this. I sometimes have people come to me and they tell me

that the Lord said this or that to them. Or, the Lord told them to do something or go somewhere to church.

But I question whether the Lord has actually told them anything of the sort. What they mean is that they have had a very strong impression brought to their mind which they interpreted as the Lord's voice to them. That is what gave them this certainty, and even a great confidence that they had heard His voice. I want you to understand that it is a very good thing to be sensitive to the Lord's will and the Lord's leading to you personally. But you should remember, that since you have the Bible, the written word of God, you have all that you need to discover God's moral and revealed will for your life. All of the promises, all of the precepts, all of the principles of truth that you should live by, are found in the Bible.

Therefore, in giving you the written Scriptures, God is telling you, He is telling all Christians, that you should not think that you will have to hear an audible voice; directing you as Paul was, where you should go, or what you should do. But you will have everything necessary, by reading the Bible and praying, to be able discover what He would have you to do. If you will pray, calling on the name of the Lord, and ask Him to give you wisdom, He will be leading and guiding you into what He would have you to do for Him.

I want to exhort you not be a lone-ranger Christian. Since you are not an apostle and since you do not have revelatory gifts, it will be good for you to begin to faithfully attend a good Bible-believing, Bible teaching church. Receive all of the teaching that is offered to you there. And as you continue in prayer, as you seek the Lord's face for the wisdom, and for the direction that He can give to you, it will be given to you. You will come to know in your mind and your heart, in relation to His word, how you should live your life before Him.

You will grow to understand what you can and should be doing in connection with others in the local church. You do not need to try to impress others with how spiritual you are, or how much you know. Rather it is your Biblical responsibility to be a humble person, receive the truth of the Bible, and then learn to serve others in the context of a local church. As a young Christian, or an untaught Christian, I hope that you will be willing to spend time talking with those who are more mature than you are in the faith.

Talk to them about every question which comes to your mind about knowing the Lord's will and doing it. Take counsel with those who you see are faithful in the local church; those who are already serving the Lord according to the gift and grace that He has given them. If you will persevere in learning the Bible, and learning to do good; if you will think about others and engage in good works, then most certainly, the Lord will be with you. If you will love the brethren God will give you the right kind of humble confidence in taking the initiative to do good works according to the gift that He has given you.

Look over the list of normative gifts in Romans chapter 12. Those normative gifts are the gifts which Christ gives to His church now that the revelatory time of the gifts that He gave to the church in the first century is over. Listen to Romans 12, verses 3-8. "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, (he means the gift of being able to preach and teach, unfolding, and opening up and setting forth the truth of the Scriptures) let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who

gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy with cheerfulness.” So, these are the gifts for this whole church age following the time of the apostles. Let us pursue our understanding of these gifts. And let us not think that the revelatory gifts which are found in 1st Corinthians chapter 12, are for our days. They did most certainly need them then, but we most certainly do not need them now. We have the Scriptures which will reveal to us God’s will for us in terms of what we should know and do in relation to the local church which we become a part of.

You will discover your gift in relation to what you are most interested in doing in relation to helping people, both in the local church and also in your everyday life. If you have believed in Christ, He by His Spirit is with you always. And when you pray, calling upon His name, He will through His word, speak to you about what you should be doing; where you should go, and what you should do. But this should be in the context of a local church which you will join. It is true that God will providentially arrange many good interactions with people in the local church you become a part of. He Himself will be speaking to your heart through these interactions.

The ultimate question in living the Christian life is this; will I live my life by the Bible? And so, ask yourself now – Are these people in this church the people who I want to be with; to learn the Bible together with them, and learn to do things for the glory of Christ and the furtherance of His cause and kingdom? This is what Christ is looking for from you; to learn to do the will of God in connection with the local church that he leads you to. As Christ did the will of God perfectly, He knows how to teach you how you can do God’s will better and better. It will not be by His audible voice speaking to you, but it will be that still small voice within your mind and heart convincing you that what you are doing is what He would have you to do.