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The Man Who Argued With God About Future Plans

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THE MAN WHO ARGUED WITH GOD ABOUT FUTURE PLANS

Acts 22:17-21

I. I know nothing about God that is not perfectly marvelous.
   A. His love for us.
   B. His condescending to hear us even argue with Him.
      1. Have you ever felt God was wrong in the way he dealt with you?
      2. Have you ever offered your rebuttal?
      3. Paul did - we want to see the story - Acts 22.

II. The Background.
   A. Paul is presenting to the Jews his reason for his conversion.
      1. He will tell the truth but he will tailor it to an audience - Jewish - that he does not want to lose.
      2. He makes a skillful effort to be heard.
      4. He, he said, he:
         a) Fearlessly spoke.
         b) Prison door opening behind him.
         c) Mob thirsting for his blood before him.
         d) He could appease & not go to jail.
         e) Oblivious to danger - asked for no release.
f) Didn't deny false report about the temple but plunged to the heart of advancing Christ's cause.

5. Watch him stress facts that appeal to a Jewish audience as far as he could go.

6. When rubber met road he dealt with it - Laurin calls it the true heroic age of the church.

7. Paul starts by identifying himself with his audience.
   a) Spoke in language they understood.
   b) Told his conversion sharing what Jesus did to his life.
   c) Wants them to make a decision.

B. Tell Conversion Story.

C. Note how he deals with Ananias.
   1. All agreed he was a good man.
   2. Didn't say he'd become a Christian tho he had.
   3. Pious Ananias would gain Jewish ear tho totally worthless in Agrippa speech.
   4. Ananias speaks as one Jew to another.

D. Even got by baptism and his conversion without an explosion.

III. Now "Chapter 2" of this Jerusalem story - so far so good.

A. Came again to Jerusalem - went to temple to pray - trance.
   1. All this still in Paul's favor holding a Jewish audience.
3. Prayed - who can oppose.
   a) Do we not get answers by prayer?
   b) Are there places we pray?
4. Temple
   a) Did he go to defile, in disobedience?
   b) (We'll find his Gentile mission
      of all things, revealed to him
      in Jewish temple!)
   c) He is still paying honor to temple
      of his old religion.
   d) Trance came - ecstasy.

2 Cor. 12:1-7
B. Then comes his argument with God!
   God said make haste, get out quickly,
   testimony will not be received.
   1. Note it's God who spoke to him
      these exodus words.
   2. God's wisdom was wiser than Paul's
      ambition and Paul's hopes for his
      brother in the flesh.
   3. This conversation of God with Paul
      revealed nowhere else - I am really
      taking you into my confidence.
   4. "They will not received thy testimony
      concerning me."
      a) Some of the saddest words in the
         Bible.
      b) It's about people who squandered
         a golden opportunity.
      c) Not new exactly - Jesus came to
         his own and not received.

John 1:11
d) A priceless gift and it not received! Not forced on anyone.
e) Some will receive – God knows in advance what you will do – I don't so I preach.
f) No joy in ignorance.

I Tim. 1:13
C. Paul said I need to stay – knowing what's happened to me they will hear surely!
1. He did not want to leave even if God said "Go Quickly."
2. He is a demonstration that he has not come to destroy the ancestral faith but fulfill it.
3. He is still optimistic about Jewish reason.
4. What could be more powerful than the witness of one's own life – what Christ has done for me!
   a) Changed from a hater of Christianity to lover of all men.
   b) Seeing a saved sinner is moving who can argue with goodness?
   c) Courage to live for our faith convicts.

Heb. 12:4
12:1-2

d) Do we daily lift up standard of Christ?
e) Is there a compulsion to share with others?
f) Do our lives reveal the true nature of Christianity?
g) Can't resist personal testimony - "I was blind, but now I see" - not strong theology but great blessing!

5. Paul's logic via Interpreters.
a) If Paul was formerly what the Jews continue to be, they could become as he was now if only they could understand his conversion.
b) Maybe his record as a persecutor should serve to convince the Jews that divine communication had caused him to preach the message that earlier he violently opposed.

6. He recites what he's done!
a) I imprisoned - I sought to do no harm to the law.
   (Through remembrance of our deeds we relive our forgiveness.)
b) Beat in every synagogue the believer.
c) Held coat for Stephen's martyrdom

D. God's rebuttal - He Knew Best - even as he does for us.

1. Depart
a) Short word - that's enough - you've said it - Go!
   1) Christian expediency has its limits.
2) Our wants must give way to His will.
3) Providence of God knows what's best for us.
4) Truth of gospel does not rest on sincerity or radical devotion. (Osler)
5) Sometimes our expectations of judgement is false – do you want to hear a series on "Why I left the Church of Christ?"

2. Send far hence to Gentiles.
   a) Not by Paul's choice but God's that he went.
   b) Work for Gentiles not of his choosing.
   c) Gentile hated - unclean, inferior, even their dishes were - remember Hitler and the Jews.
   d) Neither reason nor protestation availed.
   e) Word Gentile like match to gasoline or gunpowder.
      1) Started riot.
      2) Exploded!
Wesley

It is not easy for one who believes in the possibility of repentance to imagine to what a degree men are capable of hardening their hearts against Him. No, it is not often ready to think of God. That it is unprofitable even to resist such evidence. But experience makes him wiser. Those who have seen truth that would renounce all their prospects see truth.