

God's Will: There's No Stopping It

1. Paul's first defense was before the Jewish mob that wanted to kill him (Acts 22). The next day, the Roman commander (*chiliarch* [Greek], a commander of one thousand troops) brought the chief priests and the Council (Sanhedrin) together to examine Paul (22:30). When Paul addressed the Sanhedrin as brothers, the high priest ordered him to be struck (note: Ananias, the son of Nedebaeus, reigned as high priest from 48-58 or 59 AD and was known for avarice and violence).
 - a. How did Paul respond to this attack (v. 3-5)?
 - b. How did Paul respond when accused of reviling the high priest?
 - c. Is it easy to admit when you are wrong?
 - d. Why or why not?

2. Paul began his defense before Sanhedrin by saying that he had lived his life "in all good conscience before God until this day" (v. 1). It was important to Paul to have a good conscience before God and man (24:16). Man's conscience is a gift from God that acts as a judge, reminding him of the law of God (Rom. 2:15). Conscience does not set the standard but only applies it to man's soul.
 - a. Unfortunately man can abuse his conscience to the point that it becomes largely ineffective in his life. The Bible describes several different types of consciences that a man can possess:
 - 1 Corinthians 8:7 —
 - 1 Timothy 1:5 —
 - 1 Timothy 3:9 —
 - 1 Timothy 4:2 —
 - Titus 1:15 —
 - b. What are good works apart from salvation unable to do for man's conscience (Heb. 9:9)?

3. Man tries all sorts of things to avoid the voice of his conscience. He ignores it, he argues with it, he tries to silence it with drugs and alcohol, but it still speaks to him. As one philosopher said, "A guilty conscience is an early hell."
 - a. What is the only thing that can cleanse a guilty conscience (Heb. 9:14)?
 - b. Are you absolutely sure that your conscience has been washed clean by the blood of Christ?
 - c. If you are not sure, ask your pastor or group leader to help you.

4. The Sanhedrin's interrogation of Paul took a new twist when he told them that he was a Pharisee and on trial for the hope of the resurrection (v. 6-10). The Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection, began to argue with the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection or angels.
 - a. What religious groups do you think the Sadducees might be compared with today?
 - b. How important is the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ to the gospel message?
 - c. What did Paul emphasize in his message (v. 6)?
 - d. Do you think Paul's method of sharing was effective in this instance?
 - e. Why or why not?

5. As a Roman citizen, the state was required to provide Paul certain rights and privileges, one of which was the right to due legal process. The Roman commander Claudius Lysais called two of his centurions and ordered them to organize two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen, and escort Paul to Caesarea. Paul and the small army of men and horses traveled thirty-five miles northwest to Antipatris (note: Antipatris had been built by Herod the Great and named after his father). Having left Jerusalem at the third hour of the night (9 PM), they reached their destination by the next day. At Antipatris, the infantry returned to Jerusalem while the cavalry escorted Paul to Caesarea, a distance of forty miles. Paul was delivered to Felix, the governor of Judea, along with the letter that Claudius Lysais had sent. What did Felix say when he learned that Paul was from the neighboring Roman province of Cilicia (v. 34, 35)?

6. Paul provides for us an excellent example of a man who was ready and willing to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ regardless of the circumstances. In what "negative" or frightening situations in your life might you, like Paul, be able to shine for Christ?

Read: Philippians 3:1-21

Monday

v. 1-3 — NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH | This chapter of Philippians begins with a stern warning. What do you think Paul means when he says “have no confidence in the flesh”? The flesh is our “human nature”; better put it is our sinful human nature. Why do you think it is important not to put confidence in our own human abilities, will or desires (Rom. 7:18; 8:6, Gal. 5:19-21; Jer. 17:9)?

Tuesday

v. 4-8 — PAUL'S PEDIGREE | Paul's human pedigree was quite impressive, especially to other Jews. How did Paul “count” these accomplishments? The words translated “gain,” “loss” and “count” in verses 7 and 8 are accounting terms; Paul was saying he had moved his supposed “gains” into the “loss” category on the ledger of his life. What do you think he meant by that? Why couldn't Paul simply “add” Christ to his own accomplishments? In 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, Paul tells us that Christ is the only foundation for a life that is pleasing to God. If Christ is not the foundation of your life, what must you do (Jer. 1:10)?

Wednesday

v. 7-11 — THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST | Paul is calling us to reexamine the profit and loss statement of our lives. What kind of things do you usually count as profit, a nice home, good job, pleasant family, good health or an easy life? Paul says his profit column includes “the fellowship of Christ's sufferings” and “being conformed to His death.” Those are not things people normally seek after. What reason does Paul give for seeking after such unusual “gain”?

Thursday

v. 12-14 — PRESSING ON AND REACHING FORWARD | It is encouraging to read these words from the Apostle Paul, even he had not attained perfection in Christ. Notice, though, that he was totally focused on that very goal; Paul pressed on, Paul reached forward, Paul didn't look back, Paul pressed toward the goal, Paul kept Jesus Christ squarely in his sights. Read Paul's testimony at the end of his life (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Would you like to be able to say those words at the end of your life? For that to be possible, what kind of things need to become a reality in your life?

Friday

v. 15-19 — FOLLOWING PAUL'S EXAMPLE | Paul sets before us two examples; the first is himself (and those who so walk), whom we are to follow; the second are those who are enemies of the cross of Christ, whom we are to avoid (Rom. 16:17). Paul is one of the greatest examples of a godly servant in the entire Bible. While Christ-likeness (not Paul-likeness) is the goal for every Christian, we are still exhorted to emulate the godly characteristics we see in other believers. It can be much easier to apply certain biblical principles when we see them “fleshed out” in another believer (Heb. 13:7). Are there any people in your life that you can learn from? Watch them and follow their godly example.

Saturday

v. 20,21 — OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN | Do you ever tire of living in this world? Does the glorious, eternal hope we have in Christ excite you? The KJV translates the word “lowly” as “vile.” Have you ever thought of your body as vile? This passage is simply glorious because it not only teaches that we will have new bodies free from sickness, pain, disease and death, but our new bodies will also be free from sin! We will one day be in new bodies “conformed to His glorious body.” What an awesome hope we have in Christ!
