

Acts 20 (gospel)

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Now, we are going, ladies and gentlemen, to the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 20, and verse 17.

And from my leaders he sent to Ephesus, that is Paul, sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, You know that from the first day I came into Asia, after whatever I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which began with me by the lying in wait of the Jews. And now I have kept back nothing that is profitable unto you, but have shown you and have taught you perfectly, [00:01:05] and from house to house testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go down with the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the walking ghosts make to them in every city, saying that plots and addictions are my way. But none of these things move me, neither can I my life here unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy at the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus [00:02:01] to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have come preaching the kingdom of God, should see my grace no more. Therefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to defend to you all the counsel of God. Take ye therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock of which the walking ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Or, as another translation puts it, with the blood of his own. For I know this, that after my departing, should reapers' wolves enter in on you, not sharing the flock. [00:03:08] And now, in the Old Testament, the 51st Psalm.

I read the heading to you, because that is inspired, as part of the word of God, just as much as the text of the Psalms. To the chief musician, the son of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy on me, O God.

According to thy lovingkindness, according to the multitude of thy ten mercies, God hath my transgressions. Watch me, through me, from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin, [00:04:03] for I have promised my transgressions, and my sin is now before me. Against thee, O David, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was sinned in iniquity, and in sin did my ruler conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward path, and in the inward path thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

And now, a verse or two in Luke's Gospel, chapter 23, beginning at verse 32. [00:05:01] And there are also two other manufacturers.

Let with him, that is, with Jesus, to be put together. When they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and another like this, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. There said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, and they cut his ribs and tassels. And the people stood behold him, and the ruler saw also with them, he heard what they said, he said, brothers, let him say himself, in the name of Christ, the children of God. And the soldiers also marching, coming to him, and offering him dinner, [00:06:04] and saying, if thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And his inscription also was written over him, in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew, this is the king of the Jews. And one of the manufacturers, Michelang, they never heard him say, if thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other, answering, rejoicing, saying, thus must thou fear God, seeing thou that it hath been the same unto the naked, and who he indeed doth be, for we shall see to you, Lord, our peace. But this man, not God, not even this, and he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me, and thou comest into thy kingdom, [00:07:01] and Jesus said unto him, that which I say unto thee today, shalt thou be with me in paradise.

There is a passage in the 20th chapter of the Acts which I have read to you, it is of the happenings of the beginning of the last journey of the apostle Paul as a free servant of the Lord.

For we read in the subsequent chapters how after his arrival at Jerusalem he was apprehended and as the Bible, Scripture, tells us he was never again a free man throughout his lifetime. [00:08:01] I know there is a possibility that perhaps he was released from prison for a season in Rome but if so, Scripture tells us nothing about it. And Paul himself, he knew as he pursued his way that these dear churches of Pachus would be called to meet with him, he knew that they would see his face no more on the throne of Israel. We find from these verses which I have read to you or at least the verse further on at the end of the chapter that Paul hadn't spent at least three years in that big city of Asia.

He called it the Midnestone but for the space of three years [00:09:02] he hadn't ceased to wander night and day with tears. In another chapter of this wonderful book of the Acts we learn that while he was at Pachus the word of the Lord spread throughout the whole of the Roman province of Asia.

Multitudes of precious souls came here to the preaching of the Gospel and assemblies were formed here and there and poignants as white bells in the midst of the evening darkness that surrounded them. And so on this journey to Jerusalem which was going to be the last occasion on which he could have caught their purpose he sent for the elders of the church to meet them.

[00:10:02] And as we've read part of his speech too he recalled to their memory the time that he had spent in Jerusalem and his ministry in Jerusalem. Now I just want to point out very briefly first of all that he summarized, so to speak, his ministry in Ephesus under four different names. First of all he testified of the Gospel of the grace of God. The Gospel.

That's why we're here tonight. This is a gospel meeting. And then he said God wants to preach the Kingdom of God. That's another wonderful subject he had studied.

And then further on he said he had the strength to declare unto them all the Gospel of God. [00:11:02] And finally he instructed these elders or overseers whom the Holy Ghost had made overseers to lead the Church of God. The Gospel of God the Kingdom of God the Council of God and the Church of

God. These four headings I've laid down once he had said them comprehend the whole of Paul's ministry as a servant of the Lord. But tonight as I've said, this is a gospel meeting. And we are only concerned therefore with the reference to the Gospel of the grace of God.

He said in referring to the Gospel he said testifying [00:12:02] both to the Jews and also to the Jews repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now these are the two things that I have laid upon my heart tonight for the friends to speak to you about. Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. I feel that perhaps in gospel meetings such as these not sufficient stress is laid upon the absolute necessity of repentance.

The Lord spoke very solemn words concerning it in the 13th chapter of the book there were those that [00:13:02] came to him and spoke of the Galileans whose blood Ireland had mingled with their sacrifice. And they all said you think that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered these things I tell you then but he told his heroes except you repent you shall all likewise perish.

Then he referred to a terrible disaster that happened in Jerusalem the town of Siloam had collapsed and fallen and slain 80 men.

He said you think these men were sinners above all the Galileans in Jerusalem because they suffered these things I tell you then but [00:14:02] except you repent you shall all likewise perish.

We cannot say after that after these words of the Lord Jesus Christ himself that repentance toward God is not a crime necessarily it shows how to be blessed and saved. Furthermore let me refer you to another saying of the Apostle Paul this time as he was preaching to the heathen philosophers of Athens that most highly educated and cultured men in the ancient world at that time and yet steeped in idolatry he said that the times of his influence were not great thus [00:15:01] but now commander all men everywhere to repent for he appointed a day in which he would judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he must obey whereof he had given assurance to all men in that he would raise him from the dead.

God commander he does like to command doesn't he? If he commands then surely obedience to his command is much expected. God commander all men that's a universal word isn't it?

There can't be any exceptions to it. All men certainly means what it says, it means everybody. [00:16:01] He commands all men everywhere. That comprehends just what it says everywhere in this world including the castle on Tyre. He commands all men everywhere to repent.

We speak of repentance presently but why does he command all men everywhere to repent?

He's appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he must obey. That man whom he must obey whereof he had given assurance to all men in that he would raise him from the dead.

That man whom he must obey who is that?

We meditate in [00:17:01] the scripture in the 23rd book crucified between two harlots wearing the

crown of thorns over his head and with that title a mocking title and yet speaking the truth over his head the king of the Jews. Yes man crucified him. He was placed in a bottle of tomb. The seal of the old empire was placed on that tomb. But God raised him from the dead. And not only did he raise him from the dead but he exalted him to his own right hand. And that's where he is at this moment. A prince and a saviour not yet the judge. He wouldn't be the judge. God has said so. [00:18:05] The Lord Jesus himself said on one occasion the father, Judge Noah must have committed all judgments unto the Son and all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father. And he further said not only has all judgments been committed to him but he has received the authority to execute the judgment also for he is son of man. He will be the judge and he will execute the judgment.

So, my friends, in preaching the glad tidings of the grace of God it is surely embellished to warn those that hear [00:19:01] of coming judgments. The servant of the Lord must be ready in warning his hearers that the day of grace will not go on indefinitely. Indeed, I believe that the day of grace is very near in short. Now then, the subject of the words of unrepentance was written by me and I read it from the 51st Psalm.

As the heading of the psalm informs us, the circumstances in which it was written were very remarkable circumstances and grievous circumstances. For David was a real [00:20:01] saint of God.

When Samuel was sent to call him to the right wing as king over Israel he said that David was a man after his own heart. And his pathway first of all in rejection being grunted by Saul for his life like an octopus on mountains but eventually being brought by the Lord itself to the throne of Israel.

He was indeed a very wonderful saint of God. As the many signs which we have under his ownership will surely assure us that all trends is a very solid thing that even [00:21:01] a saint of God can fall.

And this is a word of warning to us all, surely. We read in the New Testament in the words of Paul again, that him the thinker, he started take heed lest he fall.

How was it that David fell? I believe that the circumstances show very clearly that for the time being David was out of touch with the Lord.

Out of communion with the Lord.

The armies of Israel under Joab the commander-in-chief were at war and they were fighting the enemies of Israel and the enemies [00:22:01] of the Lord in Ammonites.

They were besieging the city of Nabba. What was David doing? In slothful ease he was indulging himself in his own house at Jerusalem. So we find him rising from his bed next to the river and kept it a sacred room.

And David fell. David sinned grievously against the Lord. He was guilty of what we would call two major sins.

He was guilty of adultery and [00:23:01] a consequence of that adultery he was further guilty of murder.

I will say about the fight again. For the Lord himself in message to David the father said Thou hast

slain the Uriah the hearer with the sword. Thou hast taken his body to be liable. Thou hast slain the Uriah the hearer with the sword of the Ammonites. Adultery and murder.

As we know it seems for a time as though David was going to get rid of it to use a common expression of these days but the Lord [00:24:01] loves his saints far too well to allow them to get away with sin against themselves. And so one day after the trial was won to David and Bathsheba the prophet of the Lord David arrived with a message from the Lord and he told David a very simple story that Arnon learned.

He said He said in a certain city there were two men one a rich man with a abundance of flocks and herds and another poor man and all that he had was one girl which shared his food and lay in his bosom [00:25:01] and was under him as a daughter.

And one day a rich man, a friend woke up and he didn't take from his own abundant flocks of an animal to dress and set before his visitor he took the young lamb from that poor lamb and dressed it and set it before his guest. And as David told this story the anger was rising in David's heart and perhaps showed itself in his face as the Lord said this man should show me that he is worthy of death because he had no dignity and he said he would restore the lamb fourfold [00:26:01] and then came the thunderbolt.

David said to David perhaps I can bring you a lamb. He said thou art the Lamb thou art the Lamb now conviction entered into the heart of David.

Later on the three morning David said to the prophet David I have sinned against the Lord David said to him the Lord hath put away thy sin how wonderful when there is confession the Lord comes in with his palm and his fingers perhaps it was at this time also that David wrote Psalm 32 [00:27:01] from there David said to him I acknowledge my sin David I confess my sin and thou shalt never stand in the way of my sin. And so the believers along with we have in our company tonight someone who has just slipped away like that from the Lord backslidden a little bit perhaps well the way of recovery is just the same it's confession if we confess our sins wrote the apostle John he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all our sins and he spoke too of the advocate that we have with the Father Jesus Christ the [00:28:01] righteous who is the propitiation for our sins not for ours only but for the whole world so we see rich that David in his confession but I believe in the 51st Psalm we have the guidance of repentance just let me call attention to one or two parts verse 3 I acknowledge my transgressions my sins are reported repentant persons will always take the low place of all God and will acknowledge people of God's estimate of man and his sins is true against me they open up my sins and don't deceive me from the outside one might say contrary David sinned against his devil he sinned against [00:29:01] his friends for the right of the Hittites with one of David's mighty men mighty men ah yes he did he did sin against Uriah the Hittite but ultimately all sin is against God it is a challenge so to speak to the might of God it is an affront to the holiness of the mighty name of God good for David ah I acknowledge my transgressions my sins are reported against me they open up my sins and don't deceive me from the outside one might say contrary David sinned against Uriah the Hittite [00:30:01] but ultimately all sin is against God it is a challenge so to speak to the might of God that is always the future of a repentant person that is that they justify God and they condemn themselves in other words they put it in very simple language they say to God you are right and I am wrong that's the language of a repentant person and then God also behold I was shaken in victory and in sin did my mother conceive me here I believe we come to the very root of all sins for sins [00:31:01] are the root as sin itself the principle is the root and that principle

my friends is found within every member of Adam's race be not sinned in the world by God Adam and Uriah sinned in the world and death by sin and so death has to befall them for they all have sinned sin sin itself that awful principle of self will settling the human will of God in opposition to the will of God the evolution of so to speak is sin back to that origin behold I was shaken in iniquity and in sin [00:32:01] did my mother conceive me but now the other thing that the all testify both to the Jews and the Greeks more publicly and to ourselves repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ now I read that passage from the 23rd book because I believe that in that piece we have a wonderful illustration of faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ in fact he also illustrates repentance bearing in mind what we just said that a repentant person justifies wrong against [00:33:01] himself he said to his fellow thief on the other cross on the other side of that central figure we indeed justly but we receive a given reward of our deeds he made no bold remark he said they were just simply getting what they deserved what they had worked for because our Lord what they were suffering was simply the penalty of human justice for as I said before all sin is ultimately against God but then he turns to Jesus and says to his fellow Jesus I am not in the midst thereby he [00:34:01] also illustrates the principle of repentance but what a wonderful verse the next one says I never cease to wonder he said to Jesus Lord Lord Lord remember what Paul wrote in Romans 10 9 if thou shalt confess with thine mouth Jesus as Lord thou shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved this man confessed Jesus as Lord Lord remember we when thou comest into thy kingdom did ever a man [00:35:01] to the natural power look less likely to come into a kingdom than Jesus did at that moment crucified with a compliment of scorn and hatred and abuse and scoffing and sneering true it was he was barely crowned but it was a crown of thorns emblem of ignorance true it was a title on his head we learn from another gospel written by Pilate himself the king of the Jews this is the king of the Jews and that title [00:36:01] was put up in mockery I believe that in putting it up Pilate was really mocking all the Jews that he was mocking the Lord Jesus for it says that he knew that for any the chief priests had to know the law but there it was a mocking comment on his head this is the king of the Jews yet God now said a prevented thing remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom don't you see that his faith saw beyond the present circumstances his faith saw through yet and on to resurrection [00:37:03] for there must be resurrection if Jesus is to come into his kingdom surely this is God's amazing faith on this part and I do rejoice in spirit my friends I'm sure all of us here would of the Lord Jesus I rejoice in spirit as I think of the job accomplished that this must have brought to the spirit of the Lord Jesus at that moment for the very next verse says it is about the sixth hour and it is a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour now we know from the Gospels that it is during those three hours of darkness when the sun [00:38:01] withdrew its light when no creature alive could penetrate that darkness that the Lord Jesus the true and perfect sin offering offered himself without spot to God it was then that it was narrowed into actual effect what we what we read in the end that God made him of his yeagers sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him those three hours of darkness were to witness the [00:39:01] dearest and most terrible ordeal that the Savior had to pass through when he sustained in his own person the righteous judgment of God against sin and I was hastened to the cross as he had I was his own but did the Lord's reply to this repentant man and this man who faked his own life then there was still the Lord today as he would be in darkness repentance had failed God's in this man who met the Savior as he was [00:40:01] in the very remnant of his earthly earthly nature still the grace that we do belong we can say to the 59 members of the remnant so we can say the scope for every sin but he was the Lord he was only one instance in scripture mentioned of a man who was saved of such a great power as that repentance toward God faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ our Lord we receive the testimony of God [00:41:01] concerning ourselves and we believe and act of our repentance and secondly and most important of all we receive the testimony of God preserving his Son Jesus Christ our Lord the Savior and the only sinner of sinners for the speaker said on one occasion in the early

chapters of the Acts to him he overcomes sickness but to his name whomsoever the leader of them shall receive the remission of sin faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ