

**AN ARGUMENT NO ONE SHOULD BE HAVING (vv. 17-21)**

<sup>17</sup> “When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance <sup>18</sup> and saw the Lord speaking to me. ‘Quick!’ he said. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.’

<sup>19</sup> “ ‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. <sup>20</sup> And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’

<sup>21</sup> “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’

1. Describe Paul’s argument with the risen Lord?
2. When is it healthy to argue with God?
3. When is it unhealthy to argue with God?
4. When we do argue with God, what should the outcome be?

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<sup>1</sup>As quoted in Sauls, Scott. *Irresistible Faith: Becoming the Kind of Christian the World Can’t Resist*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2019.

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**THE STORY CONTINUES****PAUL TELLS HIS STORY | ACTS 22:1-21**

In his book “Irresistible,” Scott Sauls describes the inner conflict that plagued C. S. Lewis for most of his adult life. Lewis was both a romantic and realist. As a romantic he loved a good story with a happy ending. As a realist he observed that life seldom worked that way. The realist in Lewis led him to reject Christianity. While he found the story compelling, it was, in his experience, not at all true to life.

It was Lewis’ friend J. R. R. Tolkien who invited him into the beauty of the gospel. One night in a fire side chat at Magdalen College, Tolkien described how the threads of romance and reason are woven together in the biblical story. One of C. S. Lewis’ biographers captures the moment.

Tolkien showed Lewis how the two sides could be reconciled in the Gospel narratives. The Gospels had all the qualities of great human storytelling. But they portrayed a true event—God the storyteller entered his own story, in the flesh, and brought a joyous conclusion from a tragic situation. Suddenly Lewis could see that the nourishment he had always received from great myths and fantasy stories was a taste of that greatest, truest story—of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Lewis, along with Tolkien, came to see the gospel as the one story in which every other story, no matter how true or fanciful, found its ultimate meaning.

Lewis’ experience was not unlike that of the Apostle Paul. Granted Lewis’ conversion took place in the cozy confines of a drawing room at Magdalen College and Paul was knocked off his horse on the road to Damascus. But for each man, their encounter with Christ dramatically changed the course of their life.

Paul’s story became so wrapped up in Jesus’ story that Paul would live and die for the gospel. Paul, the romantic, found the story so compelling that he could not imagine anyone rejecting it. Paul the realist soon discovered that people would not only reject the story, but they would reject it violently.

In Acts twenty-two Paul positions himself on the steps of the “Antonia Fortress” and shares his story with an angry mob. It is a story we are hearing for a second time. We’ve already heard it from Luke’s perspective in chapter nine, and will hear it once again from the lips of Paul in chapter twenty six. Paul’s story is so foundational to the book of Acts that Luke wants us to hear it three times. Paul’s story is so foundational to the gospel that we need to hear it over and over again.

### **ZEALOUS FOR GOD (vv. 1-5)**

*Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic: “Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.”*

*<sup>2</sup> When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet.*

*Then Paul said: <sup>3</sup> “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. <sup>4</sup> I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, <sup>5</sup> as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.*

1. List the ways Paul tries to make a vital connection with his Jewish audience?
2. What was Paul zealous for?
3. What did his zeal lead him to do?
4. What were some of the tragic consequences of Paul’s misplaced zeal?
5. What did Paul’s zeal cause him to miss?
6. What are some of the things we tend to be zealous for (other than Christ)?
7. What happens when our zeal for other things overshadows our zeal for Christ?

### **AN ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST (vv. 6-16)**

*<sup>6</sup> “About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. <sup>7</sup> I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’*

*<sup>8</sup> “ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.*

*“ ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. <sup>9</sup> My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.*

*<sup>10</sup> “ ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked.*

*“ ‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’ <sup>11</sup> My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.*

*<sup>12</sup> “A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. <sup>13</sup> He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him.*

*<sup>14</sup> “Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. <sup>15</sup> You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup> And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’*

1. This section of the text is built around four questions. One asked by Jesus to Paul. Two asked by Paul to Jesus. One asked by Ananias to Paul. What are the four questions?
2. What is the significance of Jesus’ question to Paul?
3. Why is it important for us to ask, “Who are you, Lord?”
4. Why is it important for us to ask “What shall I do, Lord?”
5. How does Paul’s second question follow naturally on the heels of the first?
6. How does Ananias describe God’s purpose for Paul’s life?
7. Why is it important to ask ourselves, “What are you waiting for?”
8. What was the natural next step for Paul?
9. What is the natural next step for you?
10. What are some of the things that keep you from acting on God’s call for your life?
11. What are some steps you can take to make keep following Christ front and center?