

FBC Sebring Wednesday Prayer Meeting – Pastor Matt Crawford

May 4, 2016

Prayer in the Book of Acts (Part 15)

Acts 22:1-21 (ESV) – background: Paul has just been arrested in the Temple

1 *“Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you.”*

2 *And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said:*

3 *“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.*

4 *I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, 5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.*

6 *“As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me.*

7 *And I fell to the ground and heard a Voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’*

8 *And I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom you are persecuting.’*

9 *Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the One Who was speaking to me.*

10 *And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.’*

11 *And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.*

Prayer points:

- 1) Notice how Paul finds common ground with his Jewish hearers (v. 1-5, 12, 14, 17), in hopes that some will understand and believe the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). Pray that we will connect with and love people in our community for the sake of the gospel.
- 2) Praise God for His mercy and grace in saving a persecutor like Paul – which means that there is mercy and grace for *everyone* at the cross!
- 3) Thank God for His sovereignty – even over those who persecute His children.

12 *“And one Ananias, a devout man according to the Law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,*

13 *came to me, and standing by me said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him.*

14 And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know His will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from His mouth;

15 for you will be a witness for Him to everyone of what you have seen and heard.

16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His Name.'

17 "When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance

18 and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.'

19 And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in You.

20 And when the blood of Stephen Your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.'

21 And He said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

Prayer points:

- 1) Thank God for His similar calling on *our* lives – to know His will, to see and hear Jesus, and to be witnesses for Him of what we have seen and heard (v. 14-15). Pray that we would obey this calling, following Jesus wherever He sends us (as Paul did – v. 21).
- 2) Ask God to give you a listening spirit even as you pray (v. 17 and following).
- 3) Pray that we would follow Stephen's example of being a faithful "witness" (*martus*, from which we get "martyr"), even if it costs us our lives.