

## TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

### LESSON THIRTEEN

(28:1-31)

#### At Melita, 28:1-10

**28** *After we had escaped, we then learned that the island was called Malta. 2 And the natives showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. 3 Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, when a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. 4 When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live.” 5 He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. 6 They waited expecting him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead; but when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.*

*7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. 8 It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery; and Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him. 9 And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. 10 They presented many gifts to us; and when we sailed, they put on board whatever we needed.*

28:1 - Melita/Malta, was an island some 75 miles south of the island of Sicily and about 100 miles from Syracuse on the island. They had been blown some 500 miles from the island of Crete.

V. 2 - **natives** - The Greek term is translated Barbarians in Romans 1:14. It simply meant a people who did not speak Greek, or whatever language was native to the listener (or writer).

**unusual kindness** - The Greek term is the two words love and man - love of man (the source of our word philanthropy). They were such by receiving them all, building a fire for their comfort, etc. See v. 7 also. Many other people would have taken advantage of the situation. Perhaps God caused these people to so act.

**viper** - John and Jesus (Matt. 3:7; 12:34; 23:33) used this same word in reference to people of their day.

**heat** - The Greek term is transliterated into our “thermos.” Observe that Paul was also helping - not afraid to work.

V. 4 - The natives thought like most other people do at times - that physical calamities are an evidence of some sin in the lives of those being punished. However, it is not necessarily so. And every Christian should remember it. God often uses such things to teach lessons, even to the righteous. The very death of Jesus disproves the thought (if nothing else does) - the just suffering for the unjust. It is pertinent that people thought the snake was poison, whether we can prove it was or was not.

V. 5 - Paul will show that their theology is bad. But that doesn't help, since they immediately draw another false conclusion,

V. 6. **harm** - the common Greek word for evil or bad.

**he had escaped** - “Paul had been ‘saved’ from the problem of the sea, but he was not going to escape his just punishment” was their thinking. How fickle is popular opinion! (Reread Acts 14:8-18).

V. 7 - **hospitably** - The Greek word is the word for lovingmindedly; or in a friendly manner.

V. 8 - **dysentery** - A transliteration of the Greek term. His “fever” was perhaps caused by the dysentery, or something else. Peter's mother-in-law had a fever, Luke 4:38,39.

## TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

V. 9 - Luke may have helped in the healing of those who came. The word for weakness is used of disease or a deficiency of some sort; often in a comparative sense, as in II Cor. 12:9,10 or Rom. 14:1-15:7.

### At Syracuse, 28:11-12

*11 After three months we set sail in a ship which had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the Twin Brothers as figurehead. 12 Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days.*

V. 11 - The three winter months were probably December through February. Note that even if Malta was but a short distance from Sicily, another ship had wintered there, the captain probably afraid of the stormy sea. Some think that the ship's name was given because the sailors thought that the constellation was a good luck omen. It stood for the sons of Zeus, Castor and Pollux.

### At Rhegium, 28:13a In Puteoli, 28:13b, 14

*13 And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium; and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. 14 There we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome.*

V. 13 - Puteoli was an important seaport, and the chief port for Rome. It lay some 180 miles up the coast from Rhegium, which was about 75 miles north of Syracuse. Since it was such an important place, Christians were almost certain to be there, v. 14, although we know not how Christianity came to Italy. The faith of the Roman Christians was known everywhere, however. Some think that those from Rome in Jerusalem on Pentecost could have been among those converted, and then took their faith back to Italy when they went.

### Paul at Rome, 28:15-30

*15 And the brethren there, when they heard of us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them Paul thanked God and took courage. 16 And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier that guarded him.*

*17 After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews; and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brethren, though I had done nothing against the people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18 When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. 19 But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar - though I had no charge to bring against my nation. 20 For this reason therefore I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain." 21 And they said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brethren coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. 22 But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against."*

*23 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in great numbers. And he expounded the matter to them from morning till evening, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. 24 And some were convinced by what he said, while others disbelieved. 25 So, as they disagreed among themselves, they departed, after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:*

*26 'Go to this people, and say, You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. 27 For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand*

## TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

*with their heart, and turn for me to heal them.'*

*28 Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."*

*30 And he lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered.*

V. 15 - The Roman road is yet visible and used. The Christians came some 40 miles over the road, which was then over 300 years old. How they heard that Paul was coming is unknown. His letter to them some years earlier had introduced him to some, and he obviously knew some of them at the time of writing.

**Paul...took courage** - God may have been with Paul many times earlier, and have given him special revelations along, even to promising him that he would stand before Caesar, but Paul was still human and was encouraged by the brethren who loved him (even if perhaps not knowing him) enough to come and meet him. It is a good example for us.

V. 16 - As in Caesarea, and pretty much throughout the trip the prisoner was treated kindly.

V. 17 - Of course, multitudes of Jews were in Rome and thereabouts, and the Roman letter gives evidence that some were Christians. Paul, even if an apostle to the Gentiles, still attempts to win some of his brethren according to the flesh.

V. 19 - **Jews** - The first time that Paul so characterizes those who opposed him.

V. 20 - Note again: Paul's thrust was about the "hope of Israel" which was fully realized in Christ Jesus. For some, it would not help to so state.

V. 21 - As far as the Jews were concerned, they were not predisposed against Paul, though they

may well have heard of him (see v. 22). They evidently did not know why he was in Rome until he informed them. This may say something indirectly about his case - the Jews in Judea considered their evidence so flimsy that they didn't bother to go to Rome to defend themselves.

V. 22 - **sect** - the same word as in 24:5. It also occurs in Galatians 5:20. As used then, it seemed to mean a party or faction of a larger group (i.e., Jewish Pharisees, Sadducees, etc.). Now, we use it various ways, sometimes making it equal to heresy (which word transliterates the Greek term rather than translating it). Heresy means, generally, either a position held contrary to a revealed truth, or a doctrine considered to be untrue, and to which a group adheres, making it a major part of their belief. It is fair to say, however, that it is defined various ways, though generally the above is true. It obviously relates to what is considered as essential and truth rather than opinion.

In the early years of Christianity, those considered heretics were anathematized from the fellowship.

In later years of the church, that which was considered essential and normative for the members was called "dogma" or sometimes (essential) doctrine or confession of faith. Wrapped up in this problem is the question of infallibility (Whose interpretation shall be held as correct?) which rightly must be considered, since the basic principle upon which the Protestantism stands is that every man is his own interpreter and no one has the right to lord it over another. Hence, for these and other reasons, heresy and sect are difficult concepts to handle. For instance, one might be divisive (schismatic) and not over any major doctrine, or even a minor doctrine, etc. Various positions might be held on certain things, and yet no one would be accused of heresy. One ought to be careful about terms, being biblical if possible, and correct according to current usage as well.

The Jewish men doubtless knew of the Christians in Rome, and also knew that the report about Christians were generally bad.

## TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

V. 23 - **the kingdom of God** - It seems to me that from Paul's testimony in Acts, the kingdom of God and the church were equal in his thinking. At least he never distinguishes between them (see v. 31).

**trying to convince** - The Greek term meant persuade, which we have pointed out many times before, was and is the method most used by Paul. Those unpersuaded are then called "unbelievers."

V. 24 - Two groups as always: some persuaded, some still unbelieving. In v. 25, Luke describes the two groups as being unable to speak together (i.e. agree with each other by speaking the same thing).

V. 25 - Notice the evidence and manner of inspiration of the prophet (another reason why I think it is misleading to say *prophet* and *preacher* are synonymous) Isaiah, and Paul's judgment that what was said 700 years earlier yet had a present-day application. The general text occurs in Matthew 13:14,15; Rom. 11:8. Or, in the words of Stephen in Acts 7, and Jesus in Matt. 23:29ff., the Jewish people were characteristically unbelieving, resistant to the Holy Spirit speaking through men to them. Note again Romans 10:18-21, where the indictment of guilty is placed upon them, because they were responsible for their hearts and unbelief. Note the idea "and turn" (i.e., repent. See Acts 20:21; 26:20 etc.).

V 28 - Another item the Jews, as a whole could not get straight: that God loved the Gentiles just like he loved Jews. Observe that Paul stated that the Gentiles would listen; perhaps in contrast to Jews who would not listen.

V. 30 - As is clear elsewhere, many supported Paul in his ministry, which, it seems to me, establishes the right of a congregation to support someone, or the right of someone to be supported by a congregation or individuals.

V. 31 - Note again "the kingdom of God" and "the things concerning Jesus Christ." To me, to do the one is to do the other (i.e., to preach Christ is to preach the kingdom, and vice versa).

**unhindered** - Most commentators remark about this word with which the book of Acts ends, since it has so many interesting connotations. For instance, through many trials, Paul yet arrived in Rome, and continued to preach Christ, allowing nothing to hinder him. Again, the Gospels, Acts and all the epistles tell how God tried to lead the Jews from their allegiance to the law to the gospel, which alone makes men free and unhindered. Certainly the book of Acts is an engrossing history of the early Christians, so often hindered in their understanding, or by their culture, and their attempts to remove all obstacles so that the gospel might "run and have free course" (Phil. 1:12-14; II Thess. 3:1).

We might recall in passing that some of the epistles were written here, such as Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, and perhaps others of which we do not know. We should also consider that the surroundings in this imprisonment seem to be much more pleasant than those reflected in II Timothy.

Various people came to see Paul, or work with him, like Epaphroditus, Onesimus, Epaphras, Tychicus, Demos and Timothy among others.

Acts is truly a great book - may we be grateful to God for using Luke to write it for mankind, and that we have been privileged to study it for our edification and upbuilding in faith.

## QUESTIONS

202. How did the people on Malta contrast to the Jews with whom Paul had been dealing?

## TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

203. Does it seem to you that the stay on Malta was rather encouraging to the travelers, even after three months?

204. Did the news of Paul's coming travel ahead of him?

205. Does God sometimes work through others to encourage us?

206. How does Paul plead his case (before the state) in Rome?

207. Why did Paul say he was in chains?

208. Were the Roman Jews cordial to him?

209. What were the sources of Paul's presentation to the Jewish brethren?

210. What does Paul see as being true in Isaiah's day and also in his day?

211. Had God spoken in Isaiah's day of a salvation of the Jews which they were rejecting and would reject?

212. What would be true of (some) Gentiles that would not be true of (some) Jews in regard to this promised salvation?

213. How does Luke describe Paul's two years in Rome?

214. What do you see in the word "unhindered"?

### **SPECIAL STUDY ON BAPTISM**

Taken from Baptism: A Biblical Study  
by Jack Cottrell

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College Press Publishing Co.,  
Joplin, MO 64802

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### **ACTS 22:16**

Baptism is mentioned a number of times in the book of Acts after 2:38, but mostly just to record the fact that certain individuals were baptized (e.g., 8:12,38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15,33). Only one other passage reflects significantly on the actual *meaning* of baptism, viz., Acts 22:16. Here God's servant Ananias addresses the humble Saul of Tarsus (who is about to become Paul the Apostle) with these words: "And now why do you

## TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

delay? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”

### Saul the Sinner

To understand the meaning of baptism as taught in this passage, again we must study the historical context in which the statement is made. Especially we must inquire concerning Saul’s spiritual state at the time Ananias addresses him. Is he already saved, or is he still an unsaved sinner? To find the answer we must study all three accounts of Saul’s conversion together: Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-16; and 26:1-18.

Before his conversion experience Saul considered himself to be among the elite in believing Israel, a devout Jew who was “zealous for God” (22:3). From his perspective as a Christian, however, he realized that he had been the foremost sinner (I Tim. 1:15). He was guilty of blasphemy, persecution of Christians and of Christ Himself (26:14-15), violence, and unbelief (I Tim. 1:13). This is another example of how even the most sincere Old Covenant faith was no longer sufficient once Christ was known.

While Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute more Christians, the risen and living Christ appeared to him and demanded, “Saul, why are you persecuting me?” The bewildered and bedazzled Saul could only ask, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply: “I am Jesus, the one you are actually persecuting” (9:5; 22:8; 26:15). Immediately filled with a sense of his guilt and with fear, Saul could only ask, “What shall I do, Lord?” The reply: “Go into Damascus, and there someone will tell you what to do” (22:10).

Blinded by the brilliance of the risen Christ, Saul was led into Damascus; but no one came to him for three days. During this time the blind Saul prayed and fasted, waiting for someone to help him. He knew from a vision that a man named Ananias would come for this purpose (9:9-12). Ananias himself prepared by a vision, finally arrived after the three days of fasting and prayer. First he laid his hands on Saul so that the latter’s sight might be

miraculously restored (9:12, 17,18; 22:13). Then he announced why the Lord had confronted him to be an apostle to the Gentiles (22:14,15; see (:15,16).<sup>i</sup> Finally, Ananias told Saul what to do about his sin and guilt: “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (22:16).

Now the crucial question is this: can we discern whether Saul is still in his sins when thus exhorted, or whether he has already been saved? To put it another way, is there any point prior to this where he might have been fully converted?

Someone might suggest that he was converted on the Damascus road at the time of his encounter with Christ. Since he calls Jesus “Lord” (22:8,10), perhaps this means that he was at that point surrendering to the Lordship of Christ. This is unlikely, however. The word itself (Greek, *kurios*) was the usual term of respectful address, on which occasions it was roughly equivalent to our word “sir”. Perhaps this is all Saul meant in his first use of this term, since at this point he does not even know who Jesus is: “Who art Thou, Lord?” (22:8). But after Jesus identifies Himself (22:8), Saul again calls Him “Lord” (22:10), perhaps in a stronger sense than before, and perhaps even indicating an attitude of submission. It is still unlikely, though, that any true conversion has taken place. Saul had not yet heard the gospel offer, nor had he been told the conditions for receiving what is offered. This is why he asks, “What shall I do, Lord?” (22:10).

The fact that Saul asked this question suggests that he was at that time in the same spiritual condition as the Jews who were convicted by Peter’s Pentecost sermon. They asked, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Saul’s question is exactly the same: “What shall I do?” But whereas they were immediately told who to receive forgiveness, Saul was not told at this point what to do about his sins. Thus we conclude that he is still in them here on the Damascus road.

But even if this is so, someone might say that Saul was surely converted during the three days when he was fasting and praying. But there is no indication that any change took place in him during

## TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

this time. Conversion is usually accompanied by a deep sense of joy and relief (see Acts 8:39; 16:34), but this is not mentioned here. The fact that Saul continues to pray and fast during the whole three days shows he has not yet received that for which he is praying and fasting. He has still not had his question answered: “What shall I do?” He knows that someone named Ananias will come and tell him what to do (9:6,12), but nothing happens for three days. During this time he is still in his blindness, which is symbolic of the fact that he is still in his sins.

When Ananias first encounters Saul, what does he assume about the latter’s spiritual condition? The fact that he addresses him as “Brother Saul” (9:17; 22:13) is taken by many to be a sure indication that Ananias accepts him as a fellow Christian and thus as a saved person. It is true that Christians called each other “brother” and “brethren.” About 30 instances occur in Acts and 130 in Paul’s own writings. But this practice probably arose from the fact that the *Jews* already customarily called each other “brethren,”<sup>iii</sup> by which they meant only “fellow Jews.” This is the sense in which Paul refers to all Jews as “my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:3). The addressing of fellow Jews as brethren occurs quite often in the book of Acts;<sup>iii</sup> thus we need not think that anything more than this is implied by Ananias’ address of Saul as “brother.”

In fact there are two strong indications that Ananias did not view Saul as a saved Christian brother when he first encountered him. As we have seen in our study of Acts 2:38, salvation in the Messianic age includes receiving the Holy Spirit. But Ananias says that he has been sent to Saul for the very purpose of filling him with the Holy Spirit (9:17). This shows that Saul was not yet saved, and that Ananias was quite aware of it. The other element of the double cure of salvation is forgiveness of sins. Now, when Ananias tells Saul to rise up and wash away his sins (22:16), this shows that he sees Saul as still bearing the burden of guilt.

Thus there is nothing in the text or context that places Saul in the company of the saved when he first meets Ananias. He welcomes Ananias as the one whom God has sent at last to tell him what to do to be saved, and baptism is a central element in the instruction. It is related both to receiving the Spirit and to forgiveness, just as in Acts 2:38.

We can infer its relation to the Spirit in Saul’s case from Acts 9:12, 17,18. In verse 17 Ananias mentions two reasons why he was sent: that Saul might regain his sight and be filled with the Spirit. In the very next verse we are told that Saul’s sight returned (when Ananias laid his hands on him, v. 12) *and* that he was baptized. The implication is that the latter was the occasion for the giving of the Spirit, as promised in Acts 2:38.

The relation of baptism to the forgiveness of Saul’s sins is the focal point of Acts 22:16. We now turn to a more detailed study of this aspect of the verse.

### **Wash Away Your Sins**

Ananias’ instruction to Saul includes two aorist participles, “rising up” and “calling upon”; and two imperatives, “be baptized” and “wash away your sins.” This last item is the crucial one. What does it mean to “wash away” sins? At first the imagery might suggest to our minds the second part of the double cure, or the cleansing of our souls from the condition of sinfulness, a purifying change wrought within our very hearts. But this is not the main idea. It rather refers to the first part of the double cure, namely, the washing away of the *guilt* we have incurred because of our sins. It is equivalent to the forgiveness of sins as discussed in the study of Acts 2:38; its background is the washing or ritual cleansing ceremonies of the Old Testament. It is accomplished only by the application of the blood of Christ to our lives: “The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (I John 1:7). When Ananias says, “Get your sins washed away,” he is simply saying, “Get your sins forgiven.”

The significant point for our purposes is the close connection between baptism and the washing

## TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

away of sins. The most natural understanding is that the former is somehow the occasion or the condition of the latter. This is true for several reasons. First, this is consistent with the situation as described in the last section. Saul is under deep conviction of his sins, and has been fasting and praying for three days while awaiting instruction as to what he should do about them. Thus when Ananias tells him to “be baptized and wash away your sins,” the guilt-ridden Saul would most naturally take baptism to be what he should do to wash his sins away.

Second, this view is consistent with other New Testament teaching about baptism and salvation in general and with its teaching about baptism and forgiveness in particular. It is in effect the exact equivalent of Peter’s instruction in Acts 2:38. “Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins” means the very same thing as “be baptized and wash away your sins.”

Third, the very fact that Saul is instructed with an *imperative* to *wash away his sins* shows that it must be the result of baptism. As noted above, the only true means of washing sins away is the blood of Jesus Christ. All would surely agree that only the Lord Himself can apply His blood to our souls. That is to say, the washing away of sins is an act of God and not the act of any human being. It is a spiritual act accomplished by divine power alone. It is impossible for Saul or anyone else to literally wash away his own sins. What sense does it make, then, for Saul to be told to “wash away your sins”? How could he possibly do such a thing? Here is the answer: there was *no way* that he could do this himself *unless* the washing away of sins was dependent on something he *could* do, namely submit to Christian baptism. This is the implication of the fact that “wash away” is in the imperative form.

Finally, the *number* and *order* of the imperatives show that baptism is a condition for washing away sins. If the outward act were *only* a symbolic picture of a prior inner cleansing, we would not expect him to put both in the imperative form. In such a case it would be appropriate for the

“washing away” to be an aorist participle (like “rising up” and “calling upon”). Strictly speaking the action of an aorist participle *precedes* the action of the main verb. Ananias thus would have said, “Be baptized [imperative], having washed away your sins [aorist participle].” But he does not say this; he uses two imperatives instead.

But does the use of two imperatives in itself mean that baptism is a condition for washing away sins? Not necessarily. Both could be imperative, with baptism still being just a symbolic picture of the prior inner cleansing. But in this case, the imperatives would have to be reversed: “wash away your sins and be baptized.” In fact, *only* if they were in this order could we say that baptism just pictures the prior cleansing. But they are not; “be baptized” - an imperative - precedes “wash away your sins” - an imperative. This order of the two imperatives, along with the other reasons cited above, requires us to conclude that baptism is a preceding condition for the washing away or forgiveness of sins.

The close connection between baptism and washing in Acts 22:16 helps us to understand the baptismal content of other New Testament references to washing. For example, Paul says to the converted sinners at Corinth, “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God” (I Cor. 6:11). All three verbs are in the aorist tense, referring to a single action in the past. The verb for “washed” is the same as that used in Acts 22:16, where the action is connected with baptism. This suggests that I Cor. 6:11 is also referring to baptism.

The two modifying phrases in this verse in Corinthians also point to baptism. “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” recalls Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; and I Cor. 1:13. “In [ev] the Spirit” is the same expression as Matthew 3:11 (and parallels); Acts 1:5; and Acts 11:16. These are all baptismal references. The fact that the two phrases are used to modify all three verbs shows that the latter are all referring to a single act, namely baptism. “You were washed,” at which



## TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

time “you were sanctified” and “you were justified.”

Another passage that speaks of washing is Hebrews 10:22, which says that we have had “our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” That this speaks of baptism is clear not only from the reference to washing but also from its description as an application of water to our bodies. The statement as a whole refers to the inner and outer aspects of the “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5), namely, the cleansing of the heart from sin and the immersion of the body in water.

Two other inferences to washing that most probably are speaking of baptism are Ephesians 5:26 and Titus 3:5. These will be discussed in separate chapters.

### Calling on His Name

Ananias instructs Saul to arise and be baptized, and wash away his sins, “calling on His name.” The verb here is an aorist participle. This means that this action, while intimately connected with that of the main verb, is nevertheless meant to precede it. Saul is thus told to “call on His name” as a preface to his baptism and the washing away of his sins.

What is the significance of this action? To understand this we must look to the origin of this expression in Joel and its use elsewhere in the New Testament, especially in Acts. The Old Testament source is Joel 2:32, “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered.” Since this appears in connection with Joel’s prophecy concerning the coming of the Spirit, we are not surprised that Peter quotes it in Acts 2:21, “And it shall be, that every one who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Paul quotes it in Romans 10:13, “Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” Christians are described as those who call upon His name (Acts 9:14,21; I Cor. 1:2).

Specifically, *whose* name is being called upon? In Joel it is the name of Yahweh (Jehovah), whom we know in the New Covenant revelation to include Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the New Testament passages the name “Lord” specifically refers to Jesus Christ. This is especially clear in Acts 9:13-17; Romans 10:9-13; and I Cor. 1:2. Thus, although no specific name is mentioned in Acts 22:16, it undoubtedly refers to calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the crucial question is this: *for what purpose* or *what end* was Saul told to call upon the name of the Lord? Here again the answer is not in doubt. He must call upon the name of the Lord *for salvation*. This is Joel’s point: “Whoever calls on the name of the LORD *will be delivered*.” This is how Peter and Paul quote it: whoever calls on the name of the Lord *will be saved*. Paul equates it with the confession of the mouth that Jesus is Lord, a confession that results in salvation (Rom. 10:9,10; cf. 10:13).

Thus Ananias’ instruction does no less than confirm the unanimous Biblical testimony to the saving significance of baptism. God has promised to save us - to give us forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit - in Christian baptism. As a person prepares to be baptized, he should call upon God to keep this promise; he should call upon the Lord Jesus Christ to apply His cleansing blood to his sinful heart and to send the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a prayer of faith in the faithfulness of God.

As it applied to Saul, it meant two things. First, the fact that he was supposed to call upon the Lord’s name in connection with his baptism meant that he had not yet received salvation. The whole point of his calling upon the Lord’s name was *to be saved*. Thus this is one final confirmation of the conclusion already reached above, that Saul was not saved on the Damascus Road nor during his three days of fasting and prayer. He was not saved until he called upon the Lord’s name in baptism. Second, this “calling upon His name” was an indication of Saul’s *faith* in Jesus. We may note

## TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

that there is no specific mention of faith in Ananias' instruction, but it is implied nevertheless. According to Romans 10:14, one cannot call upon Him unless he has believed in Him. Thus Saul is here being told to do what every good Jew has to do now that the Messiah has come, namely, transform his limited Old Covenant faith into the fully-rounded faith that accepts Jesus as Yahweh Himself and as the source of salvation.

### Summary

In this chapter we have explored the teaching of Acts 22:16 on the meaning of baptism. First we recounted the basic facts of Saul's encounters with Jesus and Ananias, and concluded that he was not yet saved when Ananias instructed him concerning baptism. We noted that Ananias gave him the gospel offer of the double cure: forgiveness (the "washing away" of the guilt of his sins) and the Holy Spirit.

Next, we concentrated on the relation between baptism and the washing away of sins. We concluded that the only reasonable understanding of Ananias' words is that the washing takes place in the act of baptism. This is consistent with the context and with other New Testament teaching. Also, it is required by the fact that "wash away" is an imperative as such, and also by the number and order of the two imperatives in the verse.

Finally we saw that "calling on His name" refers to calling on the name of Jesus for His promised salvation. That this precedes baptism is shown by the participle construction and confirms the fact that baptism is for salvation. The sinner approaches baptism calling upon the Lord to save him as He has promised.

### ANDANTES

<sup>i</sup> In his brief retelling of this event to King Agrippa, Paul does not mention the role of Ananias. His summary of his commission in 26:16-18 is most

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likely what Jesus told him later through Ananias, rather than something spoken directly to him on the Damascus road.

<sup>ii</sup> Hans von Soden, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), I:145.

<sup>iii</sup> Acts 2:29,37; 3:17; 7:2,23; 13:15,26,38; 22:1,5; 23:1,5,6; 28:17,21. See also Luke 6:42 and Heb. 7:5.