

“Free Born”  
Acts 22:22-30  
(Preached at Trinity, March 19, 2008)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we saw in **Chapter 21** Paul entered into Jerusalem and immediately went to meet with James and the rest of the elders. In an effort to accommodate the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem Paul agreed to accompany two brothers to the Temple for ceremonial purification. Having entered into the Temple the Jews suddenly descended upon Paul with false accusations and were determined to kill him. Paul was rescued by the Roman authorities and taken into custody. Paul requested permission to speak and then stood on the stairs and spoke to the Jews in their Hebrew tongue.
2. In the course of his speaking he recounted his conversion experience describing how Jesus had come, throwing him to the earth and crushing his rebellion. Paul was captivated by the risen Christ and cried out, “What shall I do Lord?” Paul was saved and raised up to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.
3. Hearing Paul describe his testimony and how Christ had commanded Paul to pass over the Jews and bring salvation to the Gentiles the Jews were outraged.  
**Acts 22:22-23** – “And they gave him audience unto this word, and *then* lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a *fellow* from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. <sup>23</sup> And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air,”
4. **Verse 24** – The Roman commander realizing the crowd was out of control ordered the soldiers to take Paul to the barracks. It was his duty to maintain peace in the city.
  - A. He had no idea what was causing the uproar. Perhaps he couldn't understand Paul since he was speaking in Hebrew. Or if he could understand Paul he didn't have the theological background to understand why the Jews were so furious at the mention of the Gentiles.
  - B. He decided to have Paul examined by scourging to find out what was causing the uproar.
5. They prepared Paul for scourging. Roman law permitted scourging as a means of questioning a lawbreaker or to punish a criminal or slave. It was a terrible torture. The scourge had leather straps with bone or metal pieces attached to the ends. When applied the victim was left with open wounds that exposed the bones. The victims often died on the spot or died soon afterward.
6. Paul understood his peril. He was in mortal danger. This was not new for Paul. He had suffered many times with floggings, stonings, and beatings. As they stretched him out for scourging he informed the guard of his Roman citizenship.

7. Paul had used his citizenship before while imprisoned at Philippi.  
**Acts 16:36-38** – “And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. <sup>37</sup> But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. <sup>38</sup> And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.”
8. Roman citizens were proud of their citizenship
- A. Only Roman citizens were allowed to wear the classical toga.
  - B. Roman citizens had certain inalienable rights.  
 Only citizens had the right to vote, the right to own property and make legal contracts, the right to serve in public office, the right of immunity from certain taxes.
  - C. In addition, Roman citizens had certain judicial rights.  
 They were exempt from scourging and from the death penalty except in the case of treason.  
 The Roman statesman Cicero wrote: “To bind a Roman citizen is a crime, to flog him is an abomination, to slay him is almost an act of murder: to crucify him is— what? There is no fitting word that can possibly describe so horrible a deed.”
  - D. To violate these rights could result in severe consequences
9. Upon hearing of Paul’s citizenship the officer immediately went to inform his captain,  
**Acts 22:26** – “Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.”  
NAS “What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman.”
10. This must have struck fear in the heart of the captain. He knew the penalty for scourging a Roman citizen. He went with haste to question Paul.  
**Acts 22:27-28** – “Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. <sup>28</sup> And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free* born.”
11. There were various ways a person could obtain Roman citizenship. It could be awarded for high service to Rome or it could be purchased but it was very expensive. The Roman captain proudly informed Paul that he had acquired his citizenship by a large sum of money. Paul responded, “But I was free born.”  
 Paul didn’t buy his citizenship. He was born a citizen or “free born.” A person born to a Roman citizen was a citizen by birth.
12. **Verse 22** literally reads, “I was born.”  
 Translations often add to these words for clarification.  
 The KJV adds the word “free” – “But I was *free* born.”  
 The NAS translates it, “But I was actually born *a citizen*.”
13. Paul is saying, “I was born into this kingdom.”
14. Tonight I want to allow this text to direct our attention to the matter of citizenship. Why did the Jews become so furious in **Verses 22-23**?  
**Acts 22:22-23** – “And they gave him audience unto this word, and *then* lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a *fellow* from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. <sup>23</sup> And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air,”

- A. It had everything to do with citizenship. Everything up to this point had been calm. They were listening to Paul's words until he told them that God had sent him with this message of salvation not to the Jews but to the Gentiles – those unclean dogs.  
**Acts 22:18** – “And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.”  
**Acts 22:21** – “And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.”
- B. The Jews were proud of their citizenship in the kingdom of God. They believed the kingdom was theirs. They were the people of God. What was the basis of their claim? They believed they were born to it. It was theirs by birth. They were the children of Abraham.  
 If you asked a Jew how he received his citizenship into the Kingdom of God he would have boldly answered, “I was born into it.”
15. This was a dangerous and perilous conclusion. They believed that by birth all of the promises were theirs. They were the people of God. They were the sons of Abraham. This was a fatal conclusion. They failed to embrace the Lord of the Kingdom, the Christ, the Son of God. They crucified their King.
- A. They spoke their own condemnation  
**John 19:15** – “But they cried out, Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.”
- B. They failed to understand that their position was conditional
- C. John the Baptist told them,  
**Matthew 3:9** – “And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”
- D. Jesus had warned them  
**Matthew 21:42-43** – “Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? <sup>43</sup> Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”
- I. The question before you tonight is what is your citizenship? I'm not asking what country you belong to. Are you a citizen of the Kingdom of our Lord?
- A. The Roman soldier spoke of how much it cost him to enter into Roman citizenship
1. Citizenship in our Lord's Kingdom has a high cost
  2. The standards of this Kingdom are the highest of any Kingdom ever
- B. It demands perfect conduct
1. No wickedness is allowed  
**1 Corinthians 6:9-10** – “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, <sup>10</sup> Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

2. To enter into the Kingdom of our Lord demands perfection  
**Matthew 5:48** – “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”
- C. It demands the surrender of all that we possess
1. All of our goods  
 Jesus told the Rich Young Ruler:  
**Matthew 19:21** – “Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me.”  
**Luke 14:33** – “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”
  2. It even demands we surrender our life  
**Matthew 16:24-25** – “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”
- D. It demands a willingness to suffer  
**Acts 14:22** – “Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”
- E. How could anyone ever be able to enter such a place?  
**Matthew 19:24-26** – “And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>25</sup> When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? <sup>26</sup> But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”
- II. You must be born into our Lord’s Kingdom – Every Christian is a citizen in this heavenly kingdom  
**Philippians 3:20** – “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;”
- A. There are many who try to enter the wrong way
1. Jesus spoke of the false teachers who pretend to lead the people but it can be applied to false professors who seek to enter apart from Christ.  
**John 10:1** – “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.
  2. Multitudes today are seeking to buy their way into the Kingdom of God
    - a. They spare no expense. Listen to the Roman Captain  
**Acts 22:28** – “And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom.”
    - b. Many try to buy off God by their good works. You can hear their words:  
**Matthew 7:22** – “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”

- c. Do you hear what they are saying – they are saying Lord, here we are. Our pockets are full. We are prepared to purchase our admission.
3. They will scream, “But you said no wicked man will enter into the Kingdom. Look at our works of righteousness!!”  
They failed to hear all of the words of the Kingdom  
**Titus 3:5** – “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”  
**Ephesians 2:8-9** – “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: <sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast.”  
**Romans 3:20** – “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.”
- B. You must be born into our Lord’s Kingdom – there is no other way
1. Compare Paul’s words with the Captain  
**Acts 22:28** – “And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free* born.”
2. I am not talking of a natural birth
- a. There are many parents who presume their children are a part of this kingdom by covenant
- b. There are many children who presume that because their parents are in the kingdom they too must have access.  
They might be tempted to say, “I was born into the kingdom.”
3. Listen to the Apostle John correct this line of reasoning  
**John 1:11-13** – “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. <sup>12</sup> But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: <sup>13</sup> Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”
- a. We were not born of blood – natural descent
- b. We were not born by the will of the flesh – human decision
- c. We were not born of the will of man – through the desire of others
- d. But of God
4. We must be born again – we must be born from above  
**John 3:3** – “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
- C. I’m talking about a supernatural birth
1. The birth I’m talking about is nothing less than being raised from the dead
2. It is by the same power that raised Lazarus from the dead.  
**John 11:43-44** – “. . . Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth. . .”
3. It is by the same power that commanded light to shine at the creation of the world.  
**2 Corinthians 4:6** – “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”
4. Have you been born into the Kingdom of God?

- D. If you must be born into this kingdom how do you obtain this birth?
1. How did Paul obtain his Roman citizenship? It was none of his doing. He was born into it.
  2. How does any Christian obtain his birth citizenship into the Kingdom of God? We have no part in this. It is God's doing. His work for His glory.
  3. The point is we are not told to seek the new birth. We are to seek Christ!! The Gospel isn't first seek to find out if you are alive. The Gospel is turn from your sin and trust Christ.
  4. Those who are alive see their peril and flee to Christ.
  5. But there is always evidence of life.  
How do you know of your first birth – you are alive.  
How do you know of your new birth – there is evidence of life

**Conclusion:**

1. Are you born again? Is there evidence of spiritual life?
2. Are you a citizen of our Lord's Kingdom?  
**Philippians 3:20** – “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;”
3. The Roman captain boasted that he had purchased his citizenship. Paul simply stated, “I was born”
4. Where does your confidence lie? Our great King has come to our rescue and delivered us giving us freedom and life. We are alive in Christ.