

Acts 22- Paul preaches to the mob after his beating

THEME: Paul's defense before the mob in Jerusalem.

This chapter gives Paul's message before the mob. He recounts his encounter with Christ and his subsequent experience which brought him to Jerusalem. Then Paul appeals to his Roman citizenship to deliver himself from the awful whipping of a prisoner. - McGee

Act 22:1 "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now."

"Men?" Yes. "Brethren?" Yes, they belong to the same race. Yet these brethren want to kill him. Is he being sarcastic? No, because then he shows respect for the elder men, "and fathers." - McGee

Act 22:2 And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said:

The minute he begins to speak in Hebrew, they become quiet. It is like a raging wind suddenly dying down, like calming the waves of the seas. They are listening to a man who is one of them. He begins with his personal history. - McGee

Act 22:3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today."

Paul is being persecuted by the Jewish leaders, by the religious leaders of that day. Paul shows them that he had been one of them—he had been a Pharisee. One of the reasons he has so much sympathy for them and is so loving toward them is that he knows exactly how they feel. He is giving them his background because he wants to win them for Christ.

Paul had a tremendous background. Tarsus was actually the center of Greek learning of that day. The finest Greek university in Paul's day was in Tarsus, not in Athens or Corinth, which had passed their zeniths. Tarsus was a thriving Greek city and an educational center.

Undoubtedly Paul had been brought up in that university in Tarsus and had a Greek background, but he had also been in Jerusalem where he had studied under Gamaliel. They are listening to him now. – McGee

Act 22:4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,

Notice that Paul calls it "this way" again. He doesn't mention the church or the followers of Christ or Christians. He uses the term which they understand and which he understands. I think "this way" is still a good term to use. What is "this way"? Well, it is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It is the person of the Lord Jesus.

He is saying to them, "Listen, I have the same background you folk have. I persecuted 'this way.' I know how you feel. I did the same thing." – McGee

Act 22:5 as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

Paul began with his roots as a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia; his education at the feet of the well-known Jewish teacher, Gamaliel; and his instruction in Judaism. He then gave special emphasis to his zeal as a Jew. He had persecuted the Christian faith, filling the prisons with those who believed in Jesus. The high priest and the Sanhedrin could bear witness to the thoroughness of his methods. It was from them that he received letters authorizing him to go to Damascus and bring back Christians from there to Jerusalem to be punished. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 22:6-8 "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' So, I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

Acts 22- Paul preaches to the mob after his beating

Up to this point in Paul's message the Jews could understand perfectly, and, if they were honest, they would have to agree that what had been said was true. Now the apostle is going to tell them of an event which changed the entire direction of his life. It will be up to them to decide whether this event was of God.

As Paul journeyed to Damascus ... a great light from heaven shone around him. The fact that it happened about noon, here recorded for the first time, indicates that the light was more brilliant and glorious than the sun at its height. Struck to the ground by the intensity of the light, the persecutor heard a voice from heaven saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Upon inquiry, he learned that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was speaking to him from heaven. The Nazarene had risen from the dead and was glorified above. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Notice that despite his great knowledge of the Torah. He chooses this occasion to reach them with his testimony. Why would the apostle use his testimony? How important is it for us to leverage our testimony?

Act 22:9 "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.

The men who traveled with him saw the light and heard the sound of the voice (Act_9:7), but they did not hear the actual words that were spoken. In other words, they were conscious of noise, but not of articulate speech. - Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 22:10-11 So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

Having had this private audience with the Lord of Life and Glory, Paul made a complete commitment of his spirit, soul, and body to the Savior. This is indicated by his question, "What shall I do, Lord?" The Lord Jesus directed him to go into Damascus, and there he would receive his instructions. Blinded by the light of Christ's glory, he was led by the hand into the city. – Believers' Bible Commentary

While our encounter with Christ is not likely as dramatic as Paul's, regardless, every true encounter with Christ results in a life altering experience.

Act 22:12-13 "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him.

In Damascus he was visited by Ananias. Paul describes him to his Jewish audience as a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there. The testimony of such a man was important in corroborating the account of Paul's conversion.

Addressing Paul as "Brother Saul," Ananias commanded him to receive his sight. It was then that Paul first looked up at him. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 22:14-16 Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Several points of interest and importance should be noted in these verses. First, Ananias stated that it was the God of our fathers who had ordered the events on the road to Damascus. If the Jews were to oppose and resist what had happened, they were really fighting against God. Second, Ananias told Paul that he would be a witness for the Lord to all

Acts 22- Paul preaches to the mob after his beating

men. This should have prepared the Jewish crowd for Paul's announcement that he had been sent to the Gentiles. Finally, Paul was told to arise and be baptized, and wash away his sins.

Verse 16 has been misused to teach baptismal regeneration. It is possible that the verse only applies to Paul as a Jew who needed to dissociate himself from his Christ-rejecting nation by water baptism (see comments on Act_2:38).

A simpler solution, based on the grammatical construction of the original is as follows: Unlike the KJV, which punctuates as if there are four items in a row on the same level, the NKJV, following the original, pairs the first two items and the second two items. In the Greek there is a finite verb modified by a participle in each half of the verse. A literal rendering would be: "Having arisen be baptized, and have your sins washed off (by) calling on the name of the Lord." This last clause is supported by general biblical teaching (cf. Joe_2:32; Act_2:21; Rom_10:13). – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 22:17-21 "Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' So, I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.' "

Now, for the first time, we learn of an experience Paul had toward the close of his first visit to Jerusalem after conversion. While he was praying in the temple, he fell into a trance and heard the Lord commanding him to get out of Jerusalem quickly, because the people would not receive his testimony concerning Christ. It seemed incredible to the apostle that his own people would refuse to listen to him. After all, they knew what a zealous Jew he had been, how he had imprisoned and beaten the disciples of Jesus, and how he had even been an accomplice to the murder of Stephen. But the Lord repeated His command, "Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles." – Believers' Bible Commentary

Paul never forgot that he had been present at the stoning of Stephen and actually had charge over it. It left an indelible impression on his mind and prepared him for his own conversion. - McGee

Paul and the Roman Tribune

Act 22:22-24 And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air, the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him.

Up to this point, the Jews had been listening to Paul quietly. But his mention of going to the Gentiles with the gospel aroused insane jealousy and hatred. Chanting furiously in wild disorder, they cried out for Paul's life.

When the commander saw them in their mad frenzy, he concluded that Paul must have been guilty of some very serious crime. Apparently, he could not understand Paul's message since it was given in Aramaic, so he determined to extract a confession from the apostle by torturing him. He therefore ordered his prisoner to be brought into the barracks and bound with thongs in order to be scourged. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 22:25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?"

As these preparations for the scourging were moving ahead deliberately, Paul quietly asked the centurion if it was legal to scourge a Roman citizen when he was uncondemned. As a matter of fact, it was unlawful even to tie up a Roman citizen before his guilt had been proved! To scourge him was a very serious offense. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Acts 22- Paul preaches to the mob after his beating

Paul is being misunderstood all the way around. The Jews thought he had brought Trophimus into the temple, and he hadn't done that. The captain thought he was an Egyptian who was a riot leader, and he wasn't that man. Notice who he is. He is a Hebrew who can speak fluent Greek. Also, he is a Roman citizen. He now appeals to that citizenship to escape the scourging of a prisoner. - McGee

Notice the phrasing here. Paul carefully states this as a question and does not throw an emotional temper tantrum demanding his rights. Which do we do when our rights are violated?

Act 22:26-28 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman." Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes." The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen."

This captain, you see, was an ex-slave. He had saved his money or somehow, he got the money to buy his freedom. He advanced in the Roman army so that now he is a captain. He is amazed that he has a prisoner who is a Roman citizen who was born free. - McGee

Act 22:29-30 Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

The captain finds that he has a remarkable man on his hands. He is a learned man who speaks Greek. He is not a common crook by any means. He is a Jew, but he is also a Roman citizen. The captain says, "I am not going to treat Paul like a common criminal. We will have a hearing to find out what the charges are against him." So, the captain arranged a hearing before the chief priests and all their council.

Notice that Paul had many assets which made him suitable to be the missionary to the Roman Empire. He had a world view. Greek training had prepared him as the cosmic Christian. He was trained in the Mosaic system, which prepared him to interpret it in the light of the coming of Christ and His redemptive death and resurrection. Not the least of his assets was his Roman citizenship, which finally opened the door for him to visit Rome. - McGee