

ACTS – Lesson 22

Acts Chapter 22

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Memory verses for this week: *Psa 46:6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. Psa 46:7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

Introduction: In Chapter 21, we saw Paul go into Jerusalem even though he was warned at least twice not to go. Both times the text indicated that the Holy Spirit had led those who were asking him to not go. However, with Paul's life virtually on the line, Paul went on.

Here recorded is Paul's defense before a gathering at Jerusalem. They listened until he mentioned being sent with the gospel to the gentiles. The gathering then quickly turned again into a mob. Paul was forcibly removed into the Roman garrison and found to be a Roman citizen.

I. Paul's Personal Testimony

Acts 22:1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.

Acts 22:2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

Paul, in seeking to conciliate the mob, spoke peacefully. He addressed them as "Men, brethren, and fathers." When they heard him speak in their local Jewish language, they paid even more attention. The word translated as defense (apologia) is the root word from which the English word apologetics derives. It simply means a formal defense of one's position. In so doing, Paul begins to give an overview of his life, conversion, and ministry.

Acts 22:3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

Acts 22:4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

Acts 22:5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem?"

Paul spoke of his heritage of Judaism and how he was “brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.” In describing their zeal of God, Paul pointed out that he had been trained under the celebrated Gamaliel, grandson of Hillel, one of the great lights of Pharisaic Judaism.

In a sentence, Paul had been trained under one of the truly recognized authorities of Judaism. He notes that he too was zealous toward God as were his enemies that day. Moreover, he went on to point out that he had persecuted “this way” He carefully avoided initially using the name Christian or any other inflammatory Christian term. He then begins to recount the story of his conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts chapter 9).

One detail here not made in Acts 9 is that there evidently was already a group of Christians who had been detained and bound at Damascus. Paul apparently was sent to bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment.

We should never underestimate the power of our personal testimony. If you think you can’t witness about Jesus Christ, then just go and tell the person what Christ did for you when you got saved. The relief of the burden of sin, the solid rock that he sets under our feet, these are powerful witnesses to the truth of the gospel. Paul starts his testimony by saying “Men, brethren, fathers...” These are his people, those of his own background. He asks them to simply listen to his defence. And by speaking in the Hebrew tongue, Paul would be more effective in speaking to the Jews.

They would be much more likely to listen to him by speaking in their native language. In verse 3, Paul declares that he, like them, was a Jew. He goes on to say he was born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia. While being born in Tarsus, most of his childhood life was lived in Jerusalem. He was blessed to have been taught under the great teacher, Gamaliel. Paul had been taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers.

Paul goes on to say how zealous he was for the law. How for the love of God (he thought), he brought men and women back bound for being Christians. He had a great zeal to serve God as did those in his audience. The high priest of the people knew of his great zeal, and had granted him letters to Damascus to the synagogues giving him permission to bring back any Christians to Jerusalem.

Acts 9:2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Acts 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

Acts 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Acts 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Acts 22:6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

Acts 22:7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Acts 22:8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

Acts 22:9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

Paul recounted how in approaching Damascus around noon, he was confronted by a “great light” from heaven and a voice asking him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Luke, in noting details here not found in Acts 9, seemingly contradicts himself. However, the key is in taking together the composite of this account along with that in Acts 26. In Acts 9:7, Paul’s companions heard a ‘sound’ or a ‘noise.’ However, here it is noted they did not understand the voice. The two passages complement each other.

Acts 22:10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

Acts 22:11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

Every time Paul talked of his conversion to Christianity, he always pointed to that road to Damascus. I believe anyone who knows Jesus as Lord and Savior can point to the day and time they were saved. We might not know the exact date, but we will know where we were and what Jesus did when he saved us. This was the greatest thing that ever happened to Paul. He met the Lord and was saved. There is nothing greater that could happen to any man or woman than to find Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Acts 22:12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

Acts 22:13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

Paul continues to recount how he was directed to continue into Damascus. There, he would be told “of all things which are appointed for thee to do.” While there, God sent Ananias whom God used in restoring his sight.

Acts 22:14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

Acts 22:15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

Paul adds further detail not found in Acts 9. Paul, no doubt, had related to Luke either personally or in his preaching these additional details. Recorded here for the first time is more of what Ananias said to Paul that day. First, the God of their fathers had chosen Paul to know God's will. Paul was chosen to see "that Just One." He was allowed on several occasions throughout his ministry to see visions the resurrected Christ—the Just One.

Paul would "hear the voice of his mouth." Finally, it is said that Paul would be "his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard." Truly, a witness is exactly that. He tells what he has seen and heard. In like fashion, we have been called to witness Christ of what we have seen and heard.

There are some important things to note about Ananias. He was a devout man according to the law. He had a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there. When Paul came unto him, the sight in his eyes was restored.

Acts 9:12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

Acts 9:13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

Acts 9:14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Acts 9:16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

We see in verses 14 and 15 that God chose Paul, and would later reveal His Will for Paul's life. Paul would see the Just One, and would be a witness unto all men of what he had seen and heard.

2 Cor 12:1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 Cor 12:2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

2 Cor 12:3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

2 Cor 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Acts 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

The unlearned in reading this verse would rush to the conclusion that baptism is the agent whereby sins are washed away. However, that is not what the text says. There are two imperatives dealing with two separate matters. Both are modified by adverbial participial phrases. Ananias admonished Paul 'in arising to be baptized.' The first imperative is "be baptized."

Then, he directed Paul to wash away his sin with the modifying participial phrase, by "calling on the name of the Lord." In complete harmony with what was already written in Romans 10:13, Paul noted that the removal of sin is by an act of faith evidenced in calling on the name of the Lord. In the greater context of the New Testament, calling on the name of the Lord is the means by which sin is washed away. See Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13.

Act 2:21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

This is one of the verses that have been used to teach baptismal regeneration. We need to ask ourselves this question? Can we truly wash away our sins? I think the following verses make it clear where salvation comes from.

W.A. Criswell in the Believer's Study Bible said this about verse 16.

Here, baptism is a metaphor for washing away sins. The reality of salvation and the sign of baptism are closely associated in the N.T. Some have misunderstood these words to justify baptismal regeneration. Paul was already a Christian. *'Be baptized'* is more literally *'submit yourself to baptism,' symbolizing* what conversion had already done for him.

Luke makes it quite clear that the purpose of baptism is not for salvation or cleansing. Rather, it was an ordinance giving testimony that one has already been saved and cleansed (2:38). To read baptismal regeneration into this verse is to misunderstand the plain teachings of Paul and of the entire N.T. that salvation is totally of grace. Clearly, the *'washing'* is a dynamic spiritual experience symbolized by water baptism afterward.

The scribes and Pharisees were very upset with Christ, and said that only God could forgive sins. This was true, but Jesus was God and they did not believe Him.

Luke 5:21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

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;

Titus 3:6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

Titus 3:7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Isa 43:10 Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

Isa 43:11 I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.

Isa 43:12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God.

Probably the most simple and direct scripture concerning salvation was what Paul told the Philippian jailer.

Acts 16:27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

Acts 16:28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

Acts 16:29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

Acts 16:30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

The blood of Jesus Christ is what washes us and cleanses us from sin.

Rev 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Rev 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

It is always important to remember that baptism is a symbolic washing away of the sins. Jesus paid for our sins with his own blood, and the act of baptism is the picture of the old man dying to the old way of life, and the new man rising up to walk in newness of life. We are new creatures in Christ once we are saved.

II. Paul was warned to stay away from Jerusalem

Acts 22:17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

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 22:19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

Acts 22:20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

Acts 22:21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

Paul, in recounting his testimony and the early days of his ministry, described how in returning to Jerusalem, he was given a trance (ekstasiv ekstasis—having the sense of a divine vision) in which he was warned to leave Jerusalem. Again, further detail not recorded in Acts 9 is mentioned here. Paul evidently protested at that time to the Lord, reminding Him how he, Paul, had taken part in the martyrdom of Stephen earlier.

The thought implied evidently is that Paul was willing to face what he had helped Stephen to experience in being martyred himself. It was a noble gesture on Paul's part. He had consented unto Stephen's death and had been an accomplice of the same. He therefore thought it worthy that he should similarly suffer.

The Lord once again ordered Paul to depart from Jerusalem. The Lord had a far greater ministry in mind for Paul. He would send him "far hence unto the Gentiles."

Paul tells the angry group how that the Lord had come to him in the temple and told him to flee from the city. Paul says they will not believe the testimony about Christ. And Paul talks of the stoning of the martyr Stephen, something he could never forget. In his last words, Stephen declared a risen Lord.

Acts 7:56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.
Acts 7:57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,
Acts 7:58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.
Acts 7:59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.
Acts 7:60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Paul speaks of how God had sent him to preach unto the Gentiles, and this made the mob very upset and they were ready to kill him. This caused such an uproar that the chief captain bought Paul into the castle to be scourged.

Acts 22:22 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.
Acts 22:23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,

Like a spark in a gas can, the crowd exploded at Paul's mention of going to the gentiles. The hatred and animosity of these Jewish activists is apparent. They were incensed at the very idea of one trained at the foot of Gamaliel to be willing to defile himself in going to the gentiles with the message of the hated Jesus of Nazareth. They flared back into a frenzy calling for his death.

Insight into the character of the middle-eastern psyche is demonstrated as they hysterically cast their outer clothing off and threw dust in the air. The exasperated Roman commander, observing the renewed frenzy of the mob, ordered Paul brought into the fortress. The commander hoped to force the real reason out of Paul why the Jews had gone berserk because of him.

III. Paul, a Roman Citizen

Acts 22:24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.
Acts 22:25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?
Acts 22:26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

We see the crowd was so upset that they would no longer listen to Paul at all.

In his commentary on Acts, J. Vernon McGee said this on these verses.

“Paul never forgot that he had been present at the stoning of Stephen and actually had had charge over it. It left an indelible impression on his mind and prepared him for his own conversion. When Paul mentioned the Gentiles because he had been out in the Gentile world preaching Christ unto them. The Jews knew that. The minute he mentions the Gentiles, it was like lighting a fuse. They will hear him no longer.”

Acts 22:27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

Acts 22:28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.

Acts 22:29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

In preparation for scourging, Paul was bound with leather thongs. He then asked the centurion standing nearby if it was “lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned.” The question was rhetorical. Paul knew the answer. But he brought to the attention of the Roman officers his citizenship, which was no small matter.

The centurion promptly warned the commanding officer of Paul’s status as a Roman citizen. It was not only illegal to scourge a Roman citizen without due process of law, it was even illegal to bind the same without legal cause. The chief captain immediately enquired further of his status. The officer, in affirming Paul’s citizenship, commented how he had with a great sum purchased his citizenship. Rome had allowed aliens to purchase citizenship as a means of enriching the treasury of the empire.

Paul was born of citizens which was an even higher standing. Little is known of Paul’s parents. However, at some point, they evidently had had citizenship conferred upon them. Whether they so purchased their privilege or whether it was awarded for meritorious service to the empire, we are not informed.

In any event, their son was blessed with this privilege. Those which would have scourged Paul immediately “departed from him.” . The word translated as examined (anetazw anetadzo), though it has the sense to investigate or examine judicially. Practically it implied torture, in this case by scourging. . They all, from the commanding officer on down, understood and feared the significance of what they had almost done—scourged a Roman citizen without due process of law.

Acts 22:30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

After sleeping on it, the chief captain, still puzzled about his strange prisoner, was determined to once again set him before the council (sunedrion sunhedrion) to try and get to the bottom of the controversy.

John Calvin said this about Paul being a Roman.

“First of all, Paul asserted the rights of citizenship; then he defended himself by a general right. Although the second point was the more important (namely, that it is unlawful to flog someone before hearing his case), he would not have prevailed if the commander had not been more moved by the honor of the Roman Empire.

Nothing was then more heinous than to do anything that was contrary to the liberty of the Roman people. The laws of Valerius, Porcius, Sempronius, and others forbade anyone to inflict punishment on the body of a Roman citizen without the command of the people. The privilege was so sacred that flogging a Roman citizen was considered not only a capital offense, but an inexpiable one.”

There was a lot of difference in the captain’s citizenship than Paul’s. It says by a great sum of money the chief captain had obtained his freedom. Paul was free born. His Roman citizenship brought fear upon the captain, and he is loosed from his bonds. The chief priest and all their council were commanded to appear and Paul is brought before them. We will cover those proceedings in next week’s lesson.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.

