

Acts 22: PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIMSELF BEFORE THE CROWD

Introduction

Acts 21 ended with Paul's arrest by the commander of the Roman troops, who sent his soldiers to arrest Paul and protect him from being killed by the mob. Before they took him to the barracks, Paul asked for permission from the commander to speak to the crowd, which was granted.

Chapter 22 details Paul's speech defending himself. Paul gives a defense as to why he traveled with a Gentile from Ephesus. He reminds them of his strict education by the Pharisee Rabbi Gamaliel and how violently he had, at first, persecuted Christians. In verses 6–16, Paul recounts his conversion. In verses 17–21, he explains that when he returned to Jerusalem after his conversion, the Jews rejected him so strongly that they sought to kill him, so God told him to leave Jerusalem and concentrate on reaching the Gentiles instead. The mention of Gentiles reignites the mob's rage.

The commander realizes that neither Paul's speech nor the crowd's renewed anger explains anything. So, he falls back on the traditional Roman way to uncover information: beating people until they talk. The soldiers tie Paul up but before they flog him, Paul points out that, as a Roman citizen, he cannot be flogged until he has faced a trial. The centurion rushes to the commander, who, in turn, rushes to Paul to validate the information. All the Romans are horrified; not only would it have been a crime to flog Paul, but it was also a crime when they shackled him in the temple courtyard (Acts 21:33). Verse 30 continues the commander's search for the truth as he schedules a meeting with the Sanhedrin, hoping they can shed light on the situation.

Study the Scriptures: Read the Passage Acts 22:1-30

Note your thoughts as you read:

Write down any questions that come to mind as you read:

Think Through the Following Questions

1. What caused the people to keep quiet when Paul started speaking in Acts 22:2? What was the significance of Paul's choice of speaking to the crowd in Aramaic (a Hebrew dialect)?
2. Paul was accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple. What do you think was Paul's goal of using his personal testimony as a means of defending himself in front of the crowd?
3. Do you think Paul expected the Jewish leaders to be dissuaded or convinced by his personal story and testimony of his conversion?
4. What does Paul's defense to the crowd reveal about the power of personal testimony in witnessing Christ?
5. Why did the people's anger boil over when Paul mentioned his calling to the Gentiles in Acts 22:21-22? When did Paul include that in his testimony?
6. How does Paul leverage his rights as a Roman citizen, and what can we learn from this in terms of using our societal privileges for kingdom purposes?
7. What are examples of privileges that we have today (especially as Americans) that we can leverage for the purpose of the kingdom?
8. What does this teach us about the importance of having proper knowledge and understanding in civil matters even as we preach the gospel?

Lessons Learned: Are there any new things you learned from this passage today?

Application: How do you think this will impact your thinking and/or actions going forward?