

ACTS 21:27-22:29

When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him,²⁸ shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help us! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place."²⁹ (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.)

³⁰ The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. ³¹ While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar.³² He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

³³ The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. ³⁵ When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers. ³⁶ The crowd that followed kept shouting, "Get rid of him!"

³⁷ As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, "May I say something to you?"

"Do you speak Greek?" he replied. ³⁸ "Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the wilderness some time ago?"

³⁹ Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people."

⁴⁰ After receiving the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic:

22 “Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.”

² When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet.

Then Paul said: ³ “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. ⁴ I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, ⁵ as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

⁶ “About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. ⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’

⁸ “‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.

“I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. ⁹ My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

¹⁰ “‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked.

“‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’ ¹¹ My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

¹² “A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. ¹³ He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him.

¹⁴ “Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. ¹⁵ You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

¹⁷ "When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance

¹⁸ and saw the Lord speaking to me. 'Quick!' he said. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.'

¹⁹ "Lord,' I replied, 'these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. ²⁰ And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'

²¹ "Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

²² The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!"

²³ As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, ²⁴ the commander ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and interrogated in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this. ²⁵ As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"

²⁶ When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. "What are you going to do?" he asked. "This man is a Roman citizen."

²⁷ The commander went to Paul and asked, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?"

"Yes, I am," he answered.

²⁸ Then the commander said, "I had to pay a lot of money for my citizenship."

"But I was born a citizen," Paul replied.

²⁹ Those who were about to interrogate him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

| Have you ever been misunderstood or falsely accused? How did you handle
| the situation?

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| What accusations do the Jews make against Paul? In Acts 22:1-5, how does Paul
| begin his defense before the crowd? Why might he have chosen to start this way?

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| In verses 6-11, Paul recounts his encounter with Jesus. What key details does he
| include? Describe the overall structure of how he shares his testimony.

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| Why do you think the crowd reacted so harshly when Paul mentioned his mission
| to the Gentiles in verses 21-23?

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| Paul speaks respectfully and strategically when addressing the hostile crowd.
| What does this teach us about sharing our faith with others?

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| When have you had an opportunity to share your testimony? How can Paul's
| approach help you be more effective in sharing your spiritual story? Would you
| consider sharing your story with the group now?

DAILY READINGS

1. EXODUS 4:10-17
2. JEREMIAH 1:4-10
3. DANIEL 3:13-18
4. 1 PETER 3:13-17
5. ACTS 21:27-36
6. ACTS 21:37-22:21
7. ACTS 22:22-29