

**ACTS**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Acts chapter 22 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

If you remember from our last study, Paul arrives in Jerusalem bearing gifts from the Gentile churches for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. He is trying to get those walls of hatred, racism, bigotry and-so-on to come crashing down and this love offering was a way to show the Jewish believers that the Gentiles love them and are trying to help them in their time of need.

Now the Jewish believers were concerned that Paul was negating the Law of Moses, which he didn't do.

He believed the Law was good, the Law was perfect, the problem is that man is not good, and he can't keep the Law and thus, salvation does not come by the Law but through Jesus!

Because tensions were running high against Paul they convinced him to help pay the cost for these four men who had taken a vow of consecration unto God, going through the purification process.

Paul saw this as an opportunity to heal wounds and to open a door for him to minister to the Jews about Jesus. He became all things to all people that he might win some to Christ!

Keep in mind that it is Pentecost and Jerusalem is filled with people who have come to celebrate this feast.

And as Paul is in the Temple, there were Jews from Asia who were there for the feast and they recognize Paul. And they did not like Paul or his message of salvation in Christ!

And they stir the crowds and the Jews go nuts, they believe Paul brought a Gentile into the Temple, past the court of the Gentiles, which wasn't kosher. And now they were beating Paul up, trying to kill him. Of course Paul did not do this, but it was a good way to stir the crowds!

Now, located on the northwest corner of the Temple Mount was the Fortress of Antonia where the Roman soldiers were stationed. The Romans knew that if there was going to be trouble, it would begin on the Temple Mount and thus, this fortress was placed there!

Upon seeing this riot, the commander, Claudius Lysias calls his troops, at least 200 men to get down there and stop this riot and save that man from being killed!

And as soon as the Jews saw the Roman soldiers coming, they stopped beating Paul.

Claudius Lysias has no idea who this man is and why he is being beaten up. He thinks Paul might be a renegade Egyptian who escaped from their hands in 54 A. D.

But Paul explains he is not that man, and then he asks this commander if he could speak to the crowds from the stairs of the Fortress of Antonia, where he was being taken to.

Picture in your mind what is going on here. Paul has been beaten up, he is bloodied and probably in chains now, and he still desires to share Jesus with the people who want him dead!

That is true love for the lost, for his fellow Jews!

And, for whatever reason, the commander grants Paul permission to speak to this crowd. In Acts 21:40 we are told, **“So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying. . .”** And then we have a chapter break. But Acts chapter 22 is flowing from Paul preparing to speak to the Jewish people who wanted to kill him!

And that is where we will pick-up our study this evening, in Acts chapter 22, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

**ACTS 22****VERSES 1-2**

Paul must have been so excited. This is something that he has been waiting for these past twenty years or so. He has wanted an audience with the Jewish people, his brethren so that he can share Jesus with them, their Messiah! And now that time has come. And yes, they tried to kill Paul, but he has an audience and he is not going to let this opportunity pass him by!

And, again, it was the Feast of Pentecost and there could have been over two million people in town for this feast and what an opportunity this was!

And yes, he was able to convince thousands of Gentiles to come to Christ, but his heart's desire was to see his own people, the Jews saved!

It was so clear in the Old Testament Scriptures showing that Jesus is the Messiah and I think Paul was certain that if they could just see what the Scriptures say and the life of Jesus, he could prove to them that Jesus is their Messiah!

We are told that Paul wanted them to hear his "**defense.**" The Greek word is APOLOGIA from which we get our English word "apologetics" from.

Believe it or not, and this is several years ago, I heard Benny Hinn say that he doesn't speak forth apologetics because he doesn't have anything to apologize for in regard to what he believes.

That is not what the word means. It speaks of defending your faith, sharing with people why you believe what you believe, it speaks of doctrine.

And Benny Hinn is partially right, he doesn't give out sound Biblical doctrine and he should apologize for what he teaches.

We are to give a defense of what we believe, telling people why Jesus is so important to our lives, what He has done in us, how our lives have changed because of Him and-so-on. Give them sound doctrine!

Peter put it like this in I Peter 3:15, “**But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.**”

This word, “**defense**” is a word that speaks of a formal defense in a judicial court. In other words, can you defend your faith before the court of this world, what you believe?

You see, if we are living what we say we believe, then we need to be able to share that with others, give them the reason for the hope that is in us.

How is that done? By “**sanctifying**” or setting your life apart for the Lord, by consecrating yourself to His control and be ready to share your faith, be men and women of the Word!

Make no mistake about it, people are watching what we say and what we do. We are a witness of what we believe by our actions and if we are surrendered to the Lord then the things that we do and the things that we say will manifest His nature and not the flesh!

We defend our faith with words and actions you might say!

So as Paul began to speak he did so in the Hebrew language or Aramaic, which was the language of the day.

You see, only a few Jews could speak Hebrew which was why the Scriptures were translated into Greek, the Septuagint back in around 250 B. C., so they could read their own Scriptures!

And as Paul spoke, they grew silent, which is an amazing thing for a mob to do!

Now, as we read through Paul's defense, I want you to notice how it is broken down.

In Acts 22:3-5 we see Paul's conduct before his conversion.

In Acts 22:6-16 we see the conversion of Paul.

And in Acts 22:17-21 we see the ministry of Paul.

Keep that in mind as we are going through this section.

### VERSES 3-5

As I have said, these verses deal with Paul's conduct before he was saved, before his conversion to Christ.

So Paul starts out by saying that he is a Jew; he is one of them, common ground.

And yes, he was born in Tarsus, a city in Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey, but he was brought up in Jerusalem!

In fact, the most respected Rabbi of their day, Gamaliel taught Paul the Law and Paul became a Pharisee.

In fact, Paul says in Galatians 1:14, "**And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.**"

Thus, Paul at one time had a zeal for God like they do now, but that zeal was without knowledge, it was not correct, it was against God, not for Him.

Now that could be offensive but notice how Paul explains himself. Listen again to what he says, **“I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, 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.”** Acts 22:4-5.

Think about all that Paul did before he was saved, thinking he was serving God and yet, his actions showed that he was fighting against God.

Paul was there when Stephen was martyred. He then went on his own personal crusade to stamp out the people of the Way or Christians.

In Galatians 1:13 Paul tells us of this time, **“For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.”**

Keep in mind that Paul had been a leading rabbi in his day (Gal. 1:13–14), so he was certainly known to some of the people in the crowd.

Not only that, they could check this out with the High Priest and the other council members, how Paul obtained what we might call “arrest warrants” for Christians, to take them into custody.

And Paul pulled them out of their homes, was rounding them up wanting to bring them back to Jerusalem to place them on trial.

Now he is going to Damascus and on the way, something is going to happen in his life that changes him radically.

And instead of blasting them for trying to kill him, he says, and I will paraphrase it for you, “I understand why you have attacked me. I was once an attacker also. I understand where you are coming from.”

Notice what Paul is doing here. He is telling these Jews that he understands them, their hatred of him because of what he is saying because he once was like them; he was in their shoes you might say.

We need to be careful that we don't become hard and cold towards the unsaved because we once did what they were doing, we opposed God. Paul had been a Christian for more than twenty years, but he could still relate to those who were not Christians. May we have that kind of love for the lost, remembering where we were at before Christ and understand the unsaved!

And we see this love of Paul for the Jewish people. You see, Paul doesn't want them to remain in that condition but to see what he sees. So he goes on in Acts 22:6-16 and he speaks of his conversion.

#### VERSES 6-16

Look at what Paul is saying here. "Hey guys. I was just like you all, until I had an encounter with Jesus. Jesus met me, and my life was dramatically changed."

Sharing our conversion experience is a powerful witness of the work of God in our lives. And what we see here is that God got Paul's attention in a mighty way.

This light, the Shekinah glory shined brighter than the sun upon Paul and then the voice of God, saying to Paul "**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?**"

Again, Paul was just like these unbelieving Jews at one time. He had a zeal for God and that is why he was persecuting Christians. But he had a zeal for God without knowledge.

Instead of serving God, he was persecuting God through His saints.

A few years back I had a Catholic woman from Texas sending me teachings on the Catholic Church, trying to show me that salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone was wrong. And she shared many different teachings of the Catholic Church that went contrary to the Scriptures.

The one thing I could say about her is that she had a zeal for God, but it truly was without knowledge. And in her zealousness, she was fighting against God! I tried to share with her from the Scriptures, but she kept going back to the Catholic teachings and I finally did not send her anymore mailings as she was not interested in the truth of the Bible. And so, after about a year she stopped sending me multiple letters per week.

Now the question here is, “Who is speaking?”

Paul wanted to know and yet, maybe he didn't. Maybe he already knew it was Jesus and that is not what he wanted to hear, but the question is out and the voice from heaven responded, **“I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.”**

Do you see what Paul is doing here? Paul is giving his personal testimony of what God has done in his life.

You can argue all kinds of theological issues, but you can't argue about what God has done in a person's life, the transformation that took place, for it is there in the open for all to see.

How did God change your life? Now for some of you, you may think, “It was nothing really. When you compare it to what happened to Raul Ries or Mike MacIntosh or Greg Laurie, my testimony is boring, it is really nothing!”



Think about that for a minute. God took you who were dead in trespasses and sins and made you alive again in Christ. He adopted you into the family of God. That my friend is a testimony showing God's awesome power in your life! Don't be ashamed of it, but you need to share it as Paul shared his.

Now here in Acts 22:9 it says that those who were with Paul, **“... saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.”**

Now this is interesting because in Acts 9:7 we are told, **“And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.”**

Is this a contradiction, one hearing the voice and the other not hearing?

Not at all! In the Greek it speaks of hearing a sound, phonics, but not understanding what was being said. You see, a simple explanation.

Now, as you look at verse 10 we see Paul ask the Lord what he should do, and the Lord told Paul, **“... ‘Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.’”**

I believe it is at this point that Paul is saved for you can't call Jesus Lord unless you are saved, at least without any meaning to it.

It is after he is saved that we see the action in his life that testifies of his salvation, it doesn't save him, but it shows that he is saved, for now he is seeking direction from Jesus, what is the next step!

As hard as this is, that is how God leads, one step at a time and Paul is to go to Damascus and wait and then the next step will be shown to him.

Think about what Paul was on his way to do. Paul was blazing a trail to Damascus with fire in his eyes to arrest Christians, followers of Jesus. And now God stops him and humbles him, and he is being lead slowly to Damascus blinded by the light! God not only got his attention but his heart!

Then we see Ananias, a Christian and a Jew, a good man, God speaks to him and sends him to Paul to minister to him.

That was important for this crowd of Jews to hear, his affirmation was not given by a Gentile but a fellow Jew!

And listen again to Acts 22:14-15, **“Then he [Ananias] 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.’”**

This is not just for Paul, but I believe it is for each of us. Look at what Ananias said to Paul.

Ananias told Paul that God has chosen him to know His will, to see the Just One, and to hear the voice of God! That is what we should do every day. How can we do that?

Paul, in Romans 12:1-2 tells us, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

In other words, we are to give our life fully to God. We are to be in His Word. We are to seek His will and as we do, we will see Jesus, He will direct our lives and all we must do is walk accordingly!

Also, Peter tells us **“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles - when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.”** I Peter 4:1-7.

How true that is. We walked long enough in sin and now may we live for Him. May that be our hearts desire; to know His will, to see the Just One, to hear His voice! You won't be sorry, but you will be blessed if you take the time to spend with Him!

And as we surrender our lives to Him, as we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, we, like Paul, will be a witness of all that we have seen and heard! Our lives will be a light for Jesus or people will see the love of God manifested in our lives!

Now verse 16 some will use to say that we need to be baptized when we are saved, and this is not a proof text for baptismal regeneration or that baptism is needed for salvation. That is not what this verse is saying.

In fact, it can be literally translated, “Have thyself baptized and thy sins washed away.” You see, forgiveness of sins is based solely through faith in the Lord Jesus as Ananias says here, **“calling on the name of the Lord.”**

Paul put it this way in Romans 10:13, “**For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’**”

And in Romans 10:8-10 Paul said, “**But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.’**”

Some will also go to Acts 2:38 to say that baptism is needed for salvation. In Acts 2:38 we are told, “**Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’**”

First of all, people today don’t want to mention the word “**repentance**” because they believe it turns people off. Let me say this. If you are turned off by repentance, then you are not saved! John the Baptist spoke of repenting. Jesus spoke of repenting. The disciples spoke of repenting.

Look at this word “**repent.**” It comes from the Greek word METANOESATE and it speaks of turning around, turning back to God, which means you were moving away from Him, but you now have turned 180 degrees back to Him. So, if you don’t repent of your sins, if you don’t turn back to God, then how in the world can you be saved? You can’t!

This is a direct command, it is something that ***MUST*** be done if you are to be saved, turn to Jesus!

Paul says this of the Thessalonians regarding repentance, **“For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”** I Thessalonians 1:9.

You see, a 180 degree turn from worshiping idols to worshiping God! That is what repentance is all about!

Now what about baptism because, as some read this they think that you must repent, and you must be baptized if you are going to be saved! Is that what the Scriptures are saying here?

That is not what this is saying, and it is not what the rest of the Scriptures are saying.

When Peter speaks of baptism, he uses the Greek word, BAPTIZO. This word speaks of immersion. So what does this all mean? Is baptism needed for salvation?

First of all, to tie this all together, when Peter says, **“... ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.’ ...”** the word **“for”** in the Greek is EIS and it can be translated “because of” or “unto.”

In other words, ***“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized for the purpose of identifying you with the remission of sins.”***

You see, that is what this is talking about.

To just show you from another verse, in I Corinthians 10:2 Paul tells us, **“all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”**

The word **“into”** in the Greek is EIS, and it is the same Greek word and they were identifying themselves with the work and the ministry of Moses.

Here Peter is identifying these people with the forgiveness of sins and it is seen in baptism, not because of it.

And so, baptism is not a requirement for salvation, but it is something that the Lord has called us to do.

You see, repentance is something for us to do as individuals; it is a matter of each of our hearts.

Now, baptism is the outward expression of what has taken place in your heart, telling others you are saved, that the old life has been put to death and you have come up new in Christ.

It is as Logenecker said, “While baptism with water was the expected symbol for conversion, it was not an indispensable criterion for salvation.”

Notice what Paul said in I Corinthians 1:14-17, **“I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.”**

If baptism was needed for salvation Paul would have carried around a portable baptismal, but it was not the issue, repentance is!

Also, and I think that is clear, but if you need more, look at Acts 16:30-31 where the Philippian jailer gets saved. We read **“And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”**

Yes, baptism is an act of obedience unto the Lord, but it does not save us, Jesus does!

That was the conversion of Paul and it will lead up to his conclusion in Acts 22:17-21, the ministry of Paul.

VERSES 17-21

Here, in Acts 22:17-21 we see the ministry of Paul as he shares this with his fellow Jews.

Now, from the time of Paul's conversion until he went to Jerusalem, there was a time gap of some three years.

You see, after Paul's conversion, his brief time in Damascus (Acts 9:20-25) and his three years in Arabia (Galatians 1:17-18) Paul returns to Jerusalem.

And as Paul is in the Temple praying to the Lord, the Lord spoke to him and basically said "Paul, get out of town because they are not going to receive Me and they want to kill you!"

This was Paul's first visit to Jerusalem as a believer. Thus, we read in Acts 9:30 of what transpired, "**When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.**"

Not only did the Lord tell him to go but now the brethren are escorting him out of town to save his life!

Why didn't Paul leave when the Lord told him to go? I think Acts 22:19-20 give us some insight. We are told, "**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.'**"

What was Paul doing with the Lord? He was bargaining with the Lord, thinking he knew better than the Lord!

And it could be for some twenty years that Paul thought that the Lord was wrong and now he has a chance to show these Jews their Messiah, to show them Jesus! He just wanted to talk with them and now he had that audience!

Maybe we have felt like Paul in that we know that if we use the right words, if we show a person this, if we do that, they *HAVE* to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior!

If it was just about information, then every scientist would be a believer because when you look at life, you see the hand of God!

But it is not just information, it is a work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people who are open to receive the truth.

I have talked with people who love the Lord and they say things like, "If they would only read this book they will be convinced that there is a God!"

Now if that were true, if it were just a matter of the intellect, then many would come to know the Lord, but it is not just a matter of the intellect, but a matter of the heart, like I have said.

I can tell you that the greatest argument in the world, the strongest apologetics will not convince a person the truth of Jesus Christ. Like I have said, it is a work of the Holy Spirit to open hearts, those who are willing to receive the truth!

Let me say this, it is not a good thing to argue with the Lord. It is not that the Lord is wrong, we are. And that is what we see Paul doing here. He is arguing with the Lord!

Why was Paul doing this? I believe it is because Paul had a passion for the Jews and he thought if he could only speak to them they will see Jesus as he has seen Jesus!

And please understand that I am not putting down those who feel this way, I understand that they have such a passion for the Lord and seeing people come to saving faith they just believe the right information will do it.



But, again, these things are spiritually discerned and as Paul said in II Corinthians 4:3-4, **“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”**

Thus, when we share Jesus with people make sure you pray that God would remove the blinders on their eyes and that they may see Jesus.

And the main reason I feel that Paul thought the Lord was wrong is listen to what the Lord tells Paul in Acts 22:21, **“Then He said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’”**

The Lord is saying to Paul, “Paul, right now you are not going to minister to the Jews like you want, I have called you to go to the Gentiles.”

And that is where Paul went, to share Jesus with the Gentiles, but he always stopped in the Synagogues to share Jesus with the Jews first and then the Gentiles.

Now he has his golden opportunity to share Jesus with the Jews in Jerusalem and he does. What is their response? Let’s read on and see.

### VERSES 22-23

This is not exactly what Paul had in mind, what he expected or wanted to happen. They went crazy when Paul said that Gentiles could be saved without keeping the Law, without becoming a Jew! They were ready to kill Paul over this issue of Gentiles being saved!

The message that Paul gave them was very simple, “You may come to God just as you are – Jew, Gentile, foreigner, high, low, rich, or poor – but *you must come to Him through Jesus Christ.*”

For a Jew to accept the fact that Gentiles were on equal ground with them was too much for them to handle and as much as they listened to Paul up to this point, now he went too far.

Now we can come down hard on these Jewish unbelievers for their superiority over others, over Gentiles. We would never do something like that, would we?

I think before we are too harsh on them, we need to look at what we do, where we place people.

For example, are we offended that the “worst sinner,” a murderer is saved just as we are who are “good people”?

Some are, in fact some do not believe that mass murderers can be saved by coming to Jesus and a person who is basically good in the worlds eyes will be cast into Hell for rejecting Jesus.

Now I don't know if riots break out over this issue, but I have been in some pretty heated debates over this issue in the past.

For some, do you say, “I really don't care if they go to Hell!”?

You are wrong, I don't care what they have done, for God died for sinners, He died for us all, and His desire is that all would be saved and that should be our desire also!

Don't ignore people because of the way they dress, the way they look, or whatever, you are to be a light to them!

So they are making all kinds of noise, demanding that Paul be put to death, tearing their clothes, throwing dust up in the air. Pretty colorful when you consider all the people that were involved in this!

Also, keep in mind who is standing with Paul while all this is going on. It is the commander, Claudius Lysias. Listen to what he does next.

VERSE 24

As things move from order to chaos, the commander of these soldiers, Claudius Lysias tells his men to bring Paul into the barracks, this fortress and scourge him to find out what he said to get this crowd in an uproar.

You see, they didn't know what Paul said because they didn't know Aramaic. And this scourging was the Roman third degree to get prisoners to confess their crime or crimes against Rome and many died at the scourging post because it was so brutal, and they are preparing Paul for this.

Keep in mind, as Boice points out, that "This was not the normal Jewish flogging, which was bad enough, but the dreaded Roman flagellum. It was a beating so severe that in some cases it resulted in the death of the victim."

My pastor put it like this,

Now this examining by scourging was a practice of the Roman government in order to force the truth from a person. They would tie the person with leather thongs to a post, in a position where his back was stretched, was taut. And then they would take a whip. A leather whip that has little bits of bone and cut glass tied in it. It was designed to sort of rip the flesh.

And the one soldier would begin to lay the whip across the back, snapping it and pulling out little chunks of flesh. It was extremely painful.

The idea was that as the scribe stood by, you would cry out a confession. You would start confessing what you had done wrong. And a person under this third-degree type of pressure would soon begin to spill everything and tell everything he knew because if you would cooperate and if you would open up and tell what you knew, then they would lay the whip on a little easier.

If you would refuse they would lay it on harder and harder until you would be forced to confess. Many people died before the scourging was finished because of the loss of blood and the extreme pain. Now this is the scourging that Jesus experienced as Pilate ordered that Jesus should be scourged. Generally the scourging was thirty-nine stripes.

And so because justice must be tempered with mercy, the scourging was usually thirty-nine stripes.

- Pastor Phil Ballmaier

Keep in mind that Paul had never been scourged because it was against Roman law to scourge a Roman citizen. He had been whipped by the Jews five different times receiving 39 lashes. He had been beaten with rods three times, but he had never been scourged.

Also, they did not know that Paul was a Roman citizen, but they will soon find that out! And, as you will see, it is a big deal!

#### VERSE 25

In preparation for Paul's scourging, the guards stretched him out with thongs to make his body taut and magnify the effects of the flagellation.

Also, Roman law stated that anyone chaining a Roman citizen without a hearing would be severely punished and anyone scourging a Roman would be executed.

As they are getting Paul ready we see Paul pull out his trump card! He tells the centurion that he is a Roman citizen and it was unlawful to scourge a Roman citizen.

You see, the Valerian law forbade any Roman citizen to be bound – Paul was bound!

The Porcian law forbade any to be beaten with rods – Paul was going to be scourged.

Thus, by being a Roman citizen, Paul was freed from these actions against him. Now, as this centurion hears that Paul is a Roman citizen, he is going to go back to the commander and tell him, for their actions here could cost them their lives.

#### VERSES 26-29

Now some may wonder if Paul was lying about his Roman citizenship, but he wasn't. And one of the reasons was that the penalty for lying about one's Roman citizenship was significant. It wasn't the kind of thing people commonly lied about, so the commander could simply ask Paul directly, and he did!

Longenecker put it like this, "The verbal claim to Roman citizenship was accepted at face value; penalties for falsifying documents and making false claims of citizenship were exceedingly stiff – Epictetus speaks of death for such acts."

So as the commander confronts Paul on this issue and Paul tells him that he is a Roman citizen, the commander tells Paul that he bought his Roman citizenship and wants to know how Paul obtained his.

There were three ways to obtain a Roman citizenship.

You could buy it on the black market you might say, which would cost you a lot of money and the government allowed it, they were making money off it. That is what this commander did.

Secondly, you could be born a Roman citizen.

And lastly, it could be granted by an imperial decree as a reward for service rendered.

Bruce tells us of Paul's Roman citizenship, "How the citizenship was acquired by Paul's father or grandfather we have no means of knowing, but analogy would suggest that it was for valuable services rendered to a Roman general or administrator in the southeastern area of Asia Minor."

Thus, because of this Roman citizenship granted to Paul's father or grandfather, Paul was born a Roman citizen and he could enjoy the perks that came with it, that he would not be scourged, good perk! So they cease what they were doing and leave Paul alone!

Now think about this, how God prepared Paul for the work that he was to do. And God prepares us as well for the work that He wants us to do. My Pastor put it like this,

It is interesting how God prepared Paul as he said to the Galatians (Galatians 1:15), I was separated from my mother's womb unto the gospel. God had perfectly fitted Paul for the ministry that Paul was to accomplish for the Lord, as God always prepares the instruments in advance. The men that God uses are men that God has prepared. And Paul from his birth was being prepared by God for a very special ministry. A ministry in which Roman citizenship would play an important part.

So He had Paul born free. Born with a Roman citizenship, which meant that his father had probably done some great deed for Rome and was granted to the family automatic citizenship for the family members, which often happened. In order to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, he needed to have an understanding of the Greek culture. So he was born in Tarsus, no mean city of Cilicia, a city of Greek culture. And his earliest childhood experiences of playing with the kids on the block, he was being exposed to the Greek culture. The early schooling in Greek culture.

However, because he was a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin. His father was a devout Jew, when it came time to go to college. His father sent Paul to Jerusalem, that he might study in the Hebrew university, under Gamaliel, that he might have this great, thorough understanding of the Hebrew scriptures, being taught by one of the most respected rabbis of the day.

So all the way along this was all part of God's preparation. To prepare a man thoroughly versed in the Hebrew Scriptures, knowing the Greek culture, having the advantage of a Roman citizenship, intellectually keen and sharp, to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world. So God had been working all the way along, preparing and fitting the vessel to the use.

God thoroughly prepares the vessels He intends to use. As Paul said (Ephesians 2:10) you are His workmanship, created unto Christ Jesus for the good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. God has a plan for each of your lives if you are open, God will work out that plan. Sometimes it looks to us like God has taken detours. Sometimes we think that God has given up on His plan.

And yet God continues to work even when we don't understand what He is doing because we are trying to understand the puzzle when we have only a few pieces together. But as God patiently and slowly begins to put the pieces together and as the puzzle begins to get complete then we begin to see the picture. And we say, oh my! Isn't that beautiful. Look at that! You didn't dream it was that beautiful.

The plan of God for each of our lives as we are yielded to Him and allow Him to put the pieces of the puzzle together. That it makes sense! Beautiful!

So here is Paul, God is working. God has prepared him. And God is working and has fit him for this ministry to the Gentiles. Paul's problem is that he thought he could minister to the Jews. It's not to be, Paul. That's not your calling.

You know, the most difficult thing in the world is to try to be something God didn't make you and to fulfill a ministry God didn't give you. But the most wonderful thing in the world is to be just what God has made you and to do just what God wants you to do.

- Pastor Phil Ballmaier

### VERSE 30

The commander still wants to know what all the fuss is about regarding this man named Paul, so he calls for the Sanhedrin to come and speak of what charges they have against Paul so he could determine what to do with this man.

Keep in mind that the Sanhedrin was the Jewish congress or parliament. In a sense they were like the Religious Supreme Court!

And Paul would be given the opportunity to speak before the group that he was once a member of. Acts 26:10 clearly says that Paul had a “vote” – usually, that would be used as a member of the Sanhedrin.

That is where we will pick-up our study next time as Paul is before the Sanhedrin, men that were his companions at one-time, fellow members.

Paul was a man who loved the Lord and wanted others to come to that saving faith in Jesus. He is going to have an audience before the Sanhedrin and he will share Christ with them. He was a witness of what God had done in his own life and how this Jesus is the One whom the prophets spoke of, the Messiah!



T. H. Huxley, a well-known agnostic, was with a group of men at a weekend house party. On Sunday morning, while most of them were preparing to go to church, he approached a man known for his Christian character and said, "Suppose you stay at home and tell me why you are a Christian." The man, knowing he couldn't match wits with Huxley, hesitated. But the agnostic said gently, "I don't want to argue with you. I just want you to tell me simply what this Christ means to you." The man did, and when he finished, there were tears in Huxley's eyes as he said, "I would give my right hand if only I could believe that!"

- Our Daily Bread, January 24, 1993

What a sad statement that is and it was not that he *COULD* not believe, but he *WOULD* not believe. And that is the problem that Paul will have with these Jewish religious leaders and we will see that next time.

As I close this evening, remember what Paul was told in Acts 9:15-16, "... 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.'"

He had the general plan but now each step reveals more of God's plan for Paul's life. And, like Paul, we walk one step at a time with the Lord, trusting Him as we go. Don't walk by sight, walk by faith and see what the Lord has planned for you!

Make no mistake about it, we are all part of God's plan as he is working out His eternal purposes in our life. And as we yield ourself to Him, the picture will begin to unfold, and we will begin to see exactly the purpose and the plan that God has for us. That wonderful life when it's committed fully to Jesus Christ.

As Paul said, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. . . . And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”** Philippians

4:13, 19. May we never forget that truth!