

Acts 22

THE PERIOD OF PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT

Acts 21:26-22:23 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. **27** And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, **28** Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all [*men*] everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. **29** (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) **30** And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. **31** And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. **32** Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. **33** Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded [*him*] to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. **34** And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. **35** And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. **36** For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him. **37** And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? **38** Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest

an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? 39 But Paul said, I am a man [*which am*] a Jew of Tarsus, [*a city*] in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. 40 And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto [*them*] in the Hebrew tongue, saying: Acts

22:1-23 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence [*which I make*] now unto you. 2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) 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. 4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. 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, for to be punished. 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. 7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. 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. 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. 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. 12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the

law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt [there], 13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. 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. 15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. 16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. 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; 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. 19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 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. 21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. 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. 23 And as they cried out, and cast off [their] clothes, and threw dust into the air,

In Paul's address from the steps of Antonio, he spoke to the people until they clamored for his death. The speech deals primarily with Paul's statement of his background, education, and zeal as a persecutor of Christ, dwelling especially on the record of his conversion. For the first time, he revealed the fact that the Lord had warned him on his first trip to Jerusalem that the Jews there would "not receive of thee testimony concerning me" Acts 22:18. Acts 22:19 is especially significant in that it shows Paul's unwillingness to receive Jesus' word as final; because he seemed to be very certain

that his own background as one “them” of the opposition would enable him to convert them.

Acts 22:1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense [*which I make*] now unto you.

Brethren and fathers ... His audience was Jewish, and thus the title "brethren" was current among the Hebrews and could not, therefore, be the "new name" which the mouth of the Lord would give to the followers of Jesus.

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

Hebrew tongue... Paul addressed them in Aramaic the 1st century language of the Jews.

Acts 22:3 I am verily a man [*which am*] a Jew, born in Tarsus, [*a city*] in Cilicia (sill-ISH-ah), yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel (gah-MAY-lee-el), [*and*] taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

Dummelow gave an excellent outline of Paul's speech which properly begins with this verse:

Paul was accused of: (1) hostility to the Jews; (2) contempt for Jewish law; and (3) desecration of the temple. He replied to all three charges this way:

(1) He was a Jew by birth, educated in Jerusalem under the noted Gamaliel, was zealous for God, and a persecutor of the Christians,

(2) His conversion resulted from a divine revelation which was confirmed by another divine revelation to the prophet Ananias.

(3) That even after he became a Christian he continued to honor the temple, to worship there, and even saw a vision while worshiping in the temple.

That his preaching to the Gentiles was the result of a divine command, and was due to the rejection of God's message by the Jews.

At the feet of Gamaliel ... The honor in which Gamaliel was held by his contemporaries is demonstrated by the fact that a certain year "was only provisionally known as leap-year until he gave his approval." As a pupil of so distinguished an educator, Paul hoped to find favor with his hearers.

Being zealous for God ... There is a subtle difference in being zealous for "the law" and being zealous for God; but such a distinction was lost on the temple mob. Even today strangely enough, "a man may be learned, acquainted with Scripture, and zealous toward God, and yet an enemy and persecutor of Christ."

Paul's efforts to identify himself with his hearers were as skillful and diplomatic as was humanly possible; furthermore, they were reinforced by Paul's own convictions that he could succeed. It is important to remember that in spite of God's warning that Israel would not hear him, Paul evidently believed that he could persuade them. Such a confidence on his part was understandable, but nevertheless incorrect.

Paul's feeling, despite divine revelation to the contrary, that he could convert that gang in the temple is pitifully like the opinions of young ministers in every age. They are so sure of the undeniable truth and righteousness of their message that it is simply inconceivable to them that any man could resist it. All of us should take note of how it worked out for Paul.

It is not easy for a servant of Christ, who is himself deeply impressed with divine truth, to imagine to what a degree men are capable of hardening their hearts against it. He is often ready to think with Paul that it is impossible for any to resist such evidence. But experience makes him wiser, and shows that willful unbelief is proof against all truth and reason. Westley

Acts 22:4-5 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. 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, for to be punished.

The way ... the Church and New Testament Christianity

The high priest ... It is not known if Paul meant the current high priest Ananias the son of Nedebaeus (NEHD-bee-uhs), who was an unqualified son of the devil, "who was given to seizing for selfish plunder or satisfaction, and greed became a byword," who had been appointed by a brother of Agrippa I in AD. 47, and who was finally murdered by the Jews themselves; or if he had reference to Theophilus, "who was high priest at the time of Paul's journey to Damascus." " He was high priest from 37 A.D. to 38 A.D. It is fully possible that both these men were alive and in Paul's audience at the time of this speech.

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.

This record of Paul's conversion corresponds beautifully with all Luke had already recorded of it in Acts 9:1ff. The subtle variations in the two accounts show Paul's diplomacy on this occasion, wherein he

tried by every possible human consideration to enlist the favor of those whom he addressed. In Acts 26:17 Jesus himself announced from heaven Paul's mission to the Gentiles; and in Acts 9:15 the same announcement is made to Ananias; but, "In this address to the Jews, Paul kept that out of view for the moment, reserving it until after the vision in the temple is mentioned." Note also that whereas Ananias is spoken of as a "Christian" in Acts 9:10, here he is called "a strict and pious Jew." To be sure, he was BOTH; but Paul chose the designation that would be more readily approved by his audience. Only willful unbelief can fail to observe that in the accounts of Paul's conversion, there is the utmost harmony and agreement, and yet the most subtle variations, every one of them evidencing the most amazing skill of adapting the truth to the persons addressed, and to such a degree that no forger or interpolator could even have attempted such a thing.

Acts 22:7-8 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

1. Why persecutest thou me?

Persecution of the truth is futile and only aids the persecuted cause by (a) arousing sympathy always felt for the "underdog," (b) by intensifying the zeal of the persecuted party, and (c) by scattering and multiplying the centers of dissemination of the persecuted truth.

2. Who art thou, Lord?

This is the most important question a mortal might ask. It is who Jesus is, was, and ever is which hails him as God in the hearts of men and demands their allegiance, loyalty, and obedience.

3. What shall I do, Lord?

Paul here had a conversation with the Lord, plainly asking him what to do to be saved; but Jesus did not bypass the great commission, nor deny the sufficiency of the word as proclaimed by gospel preachers; he sent Paul to Ananias.

4. Why tarriest thou?

Why should any man tarry, or delay his baptism into Christ? Some delay because they think they are too young ... others because they fancy they are too old, some because they suffer from the delusion that they do not need to obey ... some suppose they are good enough already ... others fear they are too wicked to be saved ... still others suppose there's plenty of time yet, simply procrastinate, or wait for some mysterious power from above to move them.

I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest ... It is impossible that any man could have invented such a reply. It appears amazing even yet that our Lord would thus have associated himself with the wretched village of Nazareth while enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high. This is unlike men.

Today as I welcomed many people from areas throughout the world without variation, when people were asked, "Where are you from?" the answer was always that of a well-known city or state. Take this example:

"Where are you from?" ... "Dallas"

If human beings had been inventing the New Testament, Jesus would have replied to Paul, "I am the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, dwelling in light unapproachable!" But the Lord said, "I am Jesus of Nazareth"!

Implicit in the Lord's reply is the fact that whatever is done to the church our Lord established is also done to himself. cf: Acts 9:4.

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.

Heard not the voice ... This is actually a mistranslation and should be rendered, "They understood not the voice." Heard, which of course is in the Greek, is, however, an idiom, frequently used for "understood" or even for "understood and obeyed."

The New Testament usage of the word "hear" and its derivatives is apparent from this: "1 Corinthians 14:2, the same word is translated "understand" meaning, of course, simply that "no man understands what is being said in tongues" We have exactly the same meaning here, as proved by "hearing the voice, but beholding no man" Acts 9:7.

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.

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

This designation of Ananias as a devout, law-keeping, God-fearing Jew was true. He had also become a Christian, but Paul left this out of sight, at the moment, to avoid prejudice against Ananias' testimony before he could give it.

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 here recounted the twin miracles of his own supernatural blinding, and of the restoration of his eyesight by Ananias, another remarkable sign. In this manner Paul was further "qualifying the witness," looking to the testimony of Ananias he was about to quote.

Acts 22:14-15 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. 15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

... know his will ... Here is prophetic testimony that Paul is to be trusted as one who knows God's will.

... see that Just One... This is testimony of the holiness and perfection of Christ.

... witness unto all men ... This clearly meant that Paul was commissioned from above to preach the gospel to Gentiles ... for are not Gentiles men? But cleverly Paul still had not spoken the despised word ... Gentiles.

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

Efforts of men to spoil this text with the insinuation that it means, "Be baptized in token of the washing away of thy sins," are frustrated by the clear and certain meaning of it.

This clause states the results of baptism in language derived from the nature of the ordinance and has the meaning of "Submit to the rite in order to be forgiven."

Arise and be baptized ... Vine's Greek Dictionary, as well as many commentators, has given the meaning of this as "Get yourself baptized and your sins washed away." "We have here a noble testimony to the value which was assigned to holy baptism by the pure original church and the Apostles "

The present-day concept that baptism has nothing to do with the forgiveness of sins, that it is merely a token, the so-called outward sign of an inward grace, etc - all such notions are to be rejected in the

clear light of the word of God. The above verse could never have been written by the Holy Spirit if any such downgrading of the ordinance of baptism was valid.

Nothing is more clearly taught in the New Testament than the fact of baptism being "for the remission of sins," and that it is not to be despised by those who truly wish to be saved.

Calling on his name ... This is not praying for salvation in the ordinary sense, although of course, prayers for salvation must accompany all acts of worship and obedience of God. Some see this text as a justification of praying directly to Jesus.

Acts 22:17-21 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; 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. 19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 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. 21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

Harrison's brief analysis of this is correct:

Here Paul tells that he had left Jerusalem in response to a word from the Lord. While he was praying in the temple as a faithful Jew, God had warned him in a trance that Jerusalem would not receive his message and that therefore he should get quickly out of Jerusalem. Paul protested (even to the Lord) that the Jews' knowledge of his earlier zeal and sincerity in persecuting the Christians would convince them of the reality of his conversion. The Lord replied that he should leave Jerusalem, for he would be sent far away unto the Gentles.

In the light of this, there must remain a question of whether or not Paul was completely obedient to the Lord when, contrary to advice of many friends, he nevertheless insisted on going there.

Romans 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Paul's mention of the temple here, and his praying there, even having the vision there, - all this shows that, at the time, Paul did not understand that the temple itself had been designated by Jesus as "The House Desolate," that it was truly a den of thieves and robbers, that the glory of it was of the past tense only, that its day of grace was even at that very time expiring, and that the last word from God that was ever uttered there was this command for Paul to get quickly out of the place. However, Paul's love of his Jewish brethren was such that he even dared, in a sense, to go against the word of the Lord in an effort to reach them. Before his dealings with the temple Jews were over, however, it may be assumed that Paul got the message fully.

The Gentiles ... With this word from Paul, the riot broke out again. It was as evil and unreasonable as all riots; and only the protection of the soldiers prevented their murder of the apostle on the spot.

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.

"The despised word 'Gentiles' was a red flag waived in the face of those wild, savage bulls of hate." Such wild and bitter cries revealed

a carnal lust for Paul's blood. Here was a shout "for his immediate execution without the formality of a trial."

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

... cast off [*their*] clothes ... With Adam Clarke we view this as evidence that "Some of them were actually throwing off their clothes, in order to prepare to stone Paul." One wonders if Paul remembered what was done to Stephen, and that now his own life would have been snuffed out on the very spot where they mobbed Stephen, except for the providence of God. Some of Paul's old buddies, no doubt, were in the business of keeping the clothes of the executioners, just as he himself had done when Stephen died.

... threw dust into the air ... This was pure bestiality, characteristic of a sadistic, uncontrollable mob.

One can only imagine the perplexity and concern of Claudius Lysias (LIE-see-uhs), the chief captain. Twice in one day, there had been an awesome disturbance in the very shadow of the fortress of Antonio and Paul was the center of both disturbances. He determined to get to the bottom of it.

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.

This affords a glimpse of the brutal culture in which a "confession" was tortured out of any hapless wretch who happened to be accused or the center of any disturbance.

Brooks Foss Westcott informs us:

Recent investigations at Jerusalem have disclosed what may have been the scene of the punishment (of Jesus). It is a

subterranean chamber, discovered by Captain Warren, on what Mr. Ferguson holds to be the site of Antonio - Pilate's Praetorium - "stands a truncated column, no part of the construction, for the chamber is vaulted above the pillar, but just such a pillar as criminals would be tied to be scourged. It cannot be later than the time of Herod."

If Westcott is correct, then this is the same pillar where Paul was bound; and there is something moving in the thought that here the great apostle was bound to the very device upon which our Lord so shamefully suffered.

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?

... bound him with thongs ... This was a different kind of binding from that of "the chains" that bound Paul earlier. This was a formal stretching of his body on the pillar preparatory to beating him half to death; and the very initiation of such an act was contrary to Roman law, for a citizen of Rome might not be either bound in such a manner or scourged.

... Is it lawful ... ? Of course it was not lawful; and Paul's appeal in this instance to his Roman citizenship was all that was needed to abort the savage punishment he was about to endure. The centurion, true to his duty, at once revealed the situation to the Chief Captain chiliarch (CHILL-ee-arch), from Greek: meaning "commander of a thousand" and occasionally rendered "thousandman" in English is a military rank dating back to Antiquity.

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.

This was shocking news to Claudius Lysias, for he was already guilty of illegally binding Paul; and the penalties that Rome inflicted for violations in this sector were drastic. He at once made a personal trip to the scene of the intended scourging.

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

Paul's word was all that was required, for it was a capital offense to plead Roman citizenship if it was not true; and, therefore, Lysias did not need any documentation; which, if he had required it, would no doubt have been available in the public records of Tarsus.

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

With a great sum ... As Dummelow said, "It is evident that the chief captain had not bought his citizenship under Claudius (41-54 A.D.), who sold it for a merely nominal sum." This fact has an affirmative bearing on the early date of events in this chapter, for Claudius Lysias had received his citizenship at a time prior to Claudius.

... But I was [*free*] born. ... From this, it appears that Paul's father had been awarded Roman citizenship, or that even his grandfather had received it, by what means we are totally unaware; however, the most reasonable guess is that it came about from some signal and outstanding service to the emperor.

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.

Lysias knew full well that no man would dare to assume citizenship if it did not truly belong to him ... and orders were instantly given for the removal of the instruments of torture.

Still, the binding itself was forbidden for a citizen; and the fact of Paul's being freeborn raised the question of his having friends at Rome; and from such considerations Lysias himself was afraid.

So far as the common Jew is concerned, the man on the street. This section paints a somber picture of the hatred towards the Gospel as Paul preached it.

This contrast sharply to the dignity that Rome held toward its citizens. So bitter does the Jews hate the Gospel that they will mob murder even a brother who embraces it and preached it. So much does this pagan Roman respect his Roman law, he will protect, defend and exercise his sense of justice for any citizen even for a Jew. The contrast is marked and unmistakable. The behavior of "God's own chosen people" towards God's messenger is darkness when compared to the light of how Rome cares for its citizens.

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.

The council here was the Sanhedrin, the same evil court that had judicially murdered the Son of God; and one is struck by the position of Lysias being so much like that of Pontius Pilate. As a matter of fact, it will be remembered that Pilate's residence, like that of Felix, was actually at Caesarea. Normally, the affairs in Jerusalem were handled by the head of the Roman garrison in Antonio.

On this occasion, the bloodthirsty Sanhedrin would not be able to intimidate or frighten the chiliarch into doing their will; therefore, they were compelled against their wishes to submit to Paul's being transferred beyond the reach of their hatred. The events leading up to that development are related in the next chapter.

Sources: KJV Bible, theWord.com, Burton Coffman, BW Johnson, Adam Clark, FF Bruce, McKnight and JW McGarvey Commentaries, Wikipedia, and World Conquest.