

Acts 22**Lesson 21
Paul's Defense****Outline****I. Paul's Speech before the People (vv. 1-21)**

- A. *Life before my conversion (vv. 1-5)*
 - 1. Brought up in the strictness of the Jewish religion (vv. 1-3)
 - 2. Persecuted Christians (vv. 4-5)
- B. *My conversion (vv. 6-16)*
 - 1. The Lord appeared to me on the road to Damascus (vv. 6-11)
 - 2. Ananias came and preached to me (vv. 12-16)
 - a. He restored my sight (vv. 12-13)
 - b. He told me that God chose me to be a witness to the Gentiles (vv. 14-15)
 - c. He commanded that I be baptized (v. 16)
- C. *I was called to preach to the Gentiles (vv. 17-21)*
 - 1. The Lord told me to get out of Jerusalem quickly (vv. 17-18)
 - 2. I said that they know how I persecuted Christians (vv. 19-20)
 - 3. The Lord said, "Depart, for I will send you to the Gentiles" (v. 21)

II. The Immediate Effects of Paul's Speech (vv. 22-30)

- A. *Mob cried, "Away with him..." (vv. 22-23)*
 - 1. Tore their clothes
 - 2. Threw dust in the air
- B. *Soldiers attempted to scourge him (vv. 24-29)*
 - 1. Commander ordered scourging to know why the mob cried (v. 24)
 - 2. Paul asked if it were lawful to scourge a Roman being uncondemned (v. 25)
 - 3. When they learned that he was a Roman, they withheld scourging (vv. 26-29)
- C. *Paul brought before the Sanhedrin (v. 30)*

Key Verse that Summarizes the Chapter**Acts 22:15**

For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.

At the close of chapter 21 Paul is arrested. As he is being led into the barracks, Paul is given permission to speak. This chapter records that defense and the reaction to it.

Paul's Speech before the People (vv. 1-21)

Paul's defense (v. 1) was not merely a rebuttal of the false charges, but an effort to touch the hearts of his audience because of love for their souls. As he spoke in the Hebrew tongue, the crowd quietened and listened to Paul. When he used the language of Palestinian Jews, he gained a small degree of connection with his audience.

This address covers three points: His life before his conversion, his conversion and his call to the Gentiles.

1. Life before my conversion (vv. 1-5). The apostle established two things. First, he was brought up in the strictness of the Jewish religion (vv. 1-3). Paul was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but he was raised in Jerusalem (v. 3). He was a student of Gamaliel (v. 3).¹ "Paul was thus nourished in Pharisaic Judaism as interpreted by Gamaliel, one of the lights of Judaism...He was one of the seven Rabbis to whom the Jews gave the highest title [Rabban] (our Rabbi)."² Paul was as strict in the Jewish religion and as zealous as anyone in the crowd who was listening (v. 3). Second, he persecuted Christians (vv. 4-5). During this time he persecuted the Way³ to the point of death. Stephen was one he helped put to death, but there were more. He sought to capture believers in Christ and put them in prison (v. 4). The high priest and the council (the Sanhedrin) could verify that he had been on a mission (with their permission) to find Christians in Damascus and bring them to Jerusalem to punish them (v. 5).

Paul was not some renegade Jew who never really was true to his religion. To the contrary he was as zealous as any of them – more in fact.

2. My conversion (vv. 6-16).⁴ What made Paul change? Here, as in the previous section, he made two points: First, the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus (vv. 6-11).⁵ At about noon a bright light (brighter than the noon sun, 26:13) shone around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (v. 7).⁶ He asked, "Who are You, Lord?" The voice answered, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are

1 "Paul mentions his having been instructed in this manner in order to show that he was entitled to the full privileges of a Jew, and that he had had every opportunity to become fully acquainted with the nature of the Law" (Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

2 A. T. Robertson, *Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft & Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament. Copyright (c) 1985 by Broadman Press).

3 Luke uses the terms "the Way" to designate Christianity, the way of the Lord (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

4 The record of Paul's conversion is found in Acts 9, 22, 26.

5 It was essential that Paul see the resurrected Lord to be qualified to be an apostle (Acts 1:22).

6 What Saul had done to Christians was done to the Lord. Thus, how we treat fellow Christians or the church as a whole is how we are treating our Lord – whether good or bad.

persecuting" (v. 8). Saul's travel companions were afraid when they saw the light, but didn't hear (understand) the voice (v. 9).⁷ Saul asked what he should do. The Lord told him to go into the city (Damascus) and he would be told what he should do (v. 10, cf. 9:6). Since the light had blinded him, his companions led him into the city (v. 11). Second, Ananias came and preached to him (vv. 12-16). The preacher, Ananias, was identified as a man "who honored the Law of Moses and was highly regarded by the Jews in Damascus."⁸ He miraculously restored Saul's sight (vv. 12-13) which gave proof that what he taught Saul was from God (cf. Mark 16:17-20; Heb. 2:3-4). Ananias explained that the Lord had chosen him to be a witness to all men (including Gentiles) of all he had seen and heard (vv. 14-15). The purpose for the Lord appearing to Paul was not to save him, but to call him to preach among the Gentiles.

Ananias asked, "Why are you waiting?" (v. 16).⁹ He commanded him to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins (v. 16). We learn here that baptism is for the purpose of washing away sins (cf. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21). Why was baptism the only condition mentioned here? Evidence that he believed was seen in the fact that he went into the city at the Lord's command. Evidence that he repented was seen in that he had not eaten in three days (Acts 9:9). It is obvious that Saul was not saved on the road as many of our religious friends contend. If he was saved on the road (when the Lord appeared to him) he was still in his sins according to verse 16.¹⁰

What does calling on the name of the Lord mean? Three passages help us to understand.

- Acts 2. Peter quoted Joel saying that whoever calls on the name of the Lord can be saved (Acts 2:21). At the end of the chapter, 3,000 souls were saved (v. 41, 47). What were they told to do between those verses? They were told to believe (v. 36), repent (v. 38), and be baptized (v. 38). That is what they did (v. 41), and they were saved (v. 47). Thus, when they believed, repented and were baptized, they were calling on the name of the Lord.
- Roman 10:13, 16. In these verses Paul said that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord could be saved (v. 13). But, when he pointed out they didn't do that, he said they didn't obey (v. 16). Thus, obedience (v. 16) is synonymous with calling (v. 13).
- Acts 22:16. When Saul would arise and be baptized, then he would be calling on the name of the Lord.

3. *I was called to preach to the Gentiles* (vv. 17-21). When Paul returned to Jerusalem¹¹, the Lord spoke to him in a vision telling him to get out of Jerusalem quickly for the Jews would

7 Acts 9:7 says they heard the voice. This verse says they didn't hear. These are not contradictory. In Acts 9 they heard in the sense that they heard a voice talking, but here they didn't hear in the sense they didn't understand.

8 Johnny Stringer, *Acts, Truth Commentaries*, 466.

9 Remember, that Ananias found Saul praying (Acts 9:11). Thus, as long as he delayed his obedience (even though he was praying), he was waiting (putting off his calling on the name of the Lord).

10 See lesson 9 for more details about whether Saul was saved on the road.

11 This is likely the trip mentioned in Gal. 1:18-24 which was three years after his conversion. He spent fifteen days there (cf. Acts 9:26-30).

not receive his testimony (vv. 17-18). Paul contended that they would accept him since they all knew how sincere he was and still is, since he once persecuted Christians (vv. 19-20).

However, the Lord said, “Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles” (v. 21). In spite of Paul’s reasoning, the Lord told him to leave and go to the Gentiles. Paul made it clear that he went to the Gentiles because of this divine call, even though he wanted to stay and work among Jews in Jerusalem. This was as far as the crowd let Paul go in his defense.

The Immediate Effects of Paul’s Speech (vv. 22-30)

The mob cried, “Away with him...” (vv. 22-23). They listened until “this word” (his mentioning the Gentiles). They began shouting, “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for his is not fit to live!” (v. 22). They wanted to kill him. They tore off their clothes and threw dust in the air (v. 23). It is hard to know exactly what these two actions meant. To be sure it was “a lively picture of the uncontrolled excitement by the mob in their spasm of wild rage.”¹² It might be some action in preparation to or symbolic of stoning Paul – throwing dust toward him as they would throw stones if they had them.

Soldiers attempted to scourge him (vv. 24-29). The commander (Claudias Lysias) commanded that Paul be scourged¹³ to get him to confess what he had done to stir this crowd (v. 24). As they prepared him for scourging, Paul asked if it were lawful to scourge a Roman who had not been through a trial and found guilty (v.25). The centurion in charge advised the commander to be careful for this man is a Roman (v. 26). So the commander asked Paul if he was a Roman. Paul said, “Yes” (v. 27). Claudias Lysias said he paid a large sum to become a Roman citizen (probably referring to a bribe). Or, he may be asking how did Paul (who wouldn’t be able to pay the large sum Lysias did) become a citizen. Paul neither paid a small or large price. He was born a Roman citizen (v. 28). Thus, he stood as a more honorable Roman citizen than the commander himself! With this new information, they not only stopped before they scourged him, but were afraid because they were about to beat a Roman citizen (v. 29).

Paul brought before the Sanhedrin (v. 30). Still wanting to know what Paul might have done wrong, Paul was brought before the Sanhedrin council (the Supreme Court among the Jews).

Questions

1. What did speaking in the Hebrew language accomplish for Paul? _____

¹² A. T. Robertson, *ibid.*

¹³ “The Roman scourge (Latin, *flagellum*) was a fearful instrument of torture, consisting of three to nine strands of leather thongs, weighted with rough pieces of metal and attached to a stout wooden handle. The person to be scourged was stripped to the waist, and then tied with leather thongs, either in a stooping position over a short post or suspended by the hands above the ground. Men were known to have their eyeballs gouged out by the metal ends of the thongs, or to have their abdomens torn open, during the brutal lashings. Tacitus tells us that in such beatings seven out of ten men died, literally beaten to death; the other three were carried out in in stretcher, and most remained crippled for life” (Gareth L. Reese, *Acts*, 810).

2. What three points did Paul make in his defense? _____

3. Why would Paul make a point about persecuting Christians (vv. 4-5)? What would that mean to the crowd? _____

4. What made Paul change? _____

5. How can you show that Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus? _____

6. Is there a contradiction in whether those with Saul heard the voice? _____

7. What does it mean to call on the name of the Lord? How would you prove your answer?

8. What was Paul's reaction to the Lord telling him to leave Jerusalem quickly? _____

9. What was the point that really set the crowd off when they heard his defense? _____

10. Why were they going to scourge Paul? Why didn't they do that? _____

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