

## Acts 22:1-16

### "Paul's Message Before The Mob"

It would definitely make for a dramatic movie or miniseries. Following the perils of the apostle Paul as he makes his way throughout the Roman world... Certainly our last episode was a cliff hanger. *Leaving us hanging on the nail-biting edge of Paul being pummeled (due to false accusation); & rescued by the equivalency of a Roman SWAT team or special forces unit from the people trying to beat him, literally to death, right there on the temple mount!*

It was such an emotionally charged scene that the soldiers had to crowd surf Paul over their heads as they reached the steps of the Antonia fortress to keep him from being ripped apart! ... & Now here he is; at the top of the stairs. But before they take him inside, he calls to the commander & says, "Excuse me, if I may, I'm *begging you*, please, let me speak to the people..."

*The commander is all, "You speak Greek (translation, 'you're an educated man?') I thought you were the Egyptian terrorist who tried to bring about an overthrow a few yrs back, but got away?" Paul says, "No sir, I'm Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia. No insignificant city & I'm begging you to give me a platform to speak to these people." ... Tarsus was the educational epicenter for Greek learning in Paul's day. Athens had, had its day, Corinth's prime had past. Now, it was Tarsus that boasted the finest Greek university.*

So the commander gives the nod, Paul turns to the people & motions w/his hand. & By no small miracle, the mob that had been whipped into a frenzy, who moments ago were seeking to murder him right there on the temple mount fell into a deafening silence & Paul opened his mouth...

If you're note taker or margin etcher, his defense lays out in 3 parts. #1 His Conduct, #2 His Conversion & #3 His Commission... Let's turn our attention to Vs 1 of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Ch of the book of Acts.

#### Vs 1-2

*He'd already hushed them, now you could hear a pin drop... Why? Because he's identifying *with* them, appealing *to* them in Aramaic (their native tongue). Right now, the Romans standing next to him don't understand a word he's saying.*

He says, "Men & fathers, hear my defense before you now..." Let's note that even though they just sought to *kill* him, he's showing the utmost of respect to them. He's not all, "Hey you bunch of bums... how about you hear a guy out before you try to kill him!?" But rather he approaches them w/courtesy & dignity. "Men & fathers..."

There's a key here as it pertains to hostile, or perhaps volatile situations (maybe even a heated situation in the home) & that is this. When things heat up, we have a choice as to what kind of words we're going to employ. & The decision that we make can either bring *calm* or excite the *chaos*... We can let our pride flare up & start rolling hand grenades into the equation, or we (through the power of God's Spirit) can exercise self-control & de-escalate the situation. The bible says, "A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger."<sup>1</sup> & Again, "The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil."<sup>2</sup> Listen, just because something enters our *mind*, that doesn't mean it needs to exit our *mouth*...

Paul is weighing his words here. He's waited his whole Christian life for this moment, the opportunity to preach the gospel to his own countrymen & here they are, this is it. So he says, "Hear my *defense* before you." It's the word Greek word "apologia" from which we get our word, "apologetics". Theologically speaking it means to defend the faith—giving a reason, or rationale for the things we believe.

It's what Peter was talking about when he wrote, "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..."<sup>3</sup> Be a student of scripture & be prepared to share your story... Paul was prepared & he asks them to hear him. When they hear him speaking their language, the silence grew deafening. Then he said to them:

**Vs 3-5**

What's Paul doing here? Guys, this is so fascinating to me because this is his moment. He has their attention & he gets one shot to tell them anything he wants to tell them. Does he begin w/prophecy? No. Foreshadowings of the law or temple typology? No. He shares *his story*, his own *testimony*. Family; this should encourage you (it certainly does me)! Why? Because you can always share your story! You may not know all things eschatology, or be super learned in all the points of theology, but you *certainly know your story*.

Perhaps you recall the scene in Jn Ch 9. Jesus heals a blind man on the Sabbath & the Pharisees were ticked! They couldn't rejoice in the good, they could only grow irate because as far as they were concerned Jesus broke the law. Of course, He didn't, but He broke *their interpretation* of it.

<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Pr 15:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Pr 15:28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (1 Pe 3:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Be that as it may they stand the man before them & say, “Give God the glory, we know *this Man* (in regard to Jesus) is a sinner!” He says, “Hey, I don’t know if He is or if He isn’t.” (Translation, I don’t claim authority on the interpretation of the law). “What I *do know*” he said, “Is that though I was blind; now I see.”

The most powerful defense you have is your own testimony. People will argue with your theology, they’ll take aim at your philosophy, but how can they argue w/what Jesus has done for you personally? “This is who I used to be, this is who I now am & Jesus is the One who changed my life.” What can you say to that?

So Paul begins to lay the common ground. “I am indeed a Jew.” He doesn’t say, “Hey, I’m a Christian.” He could’ve, it was true. But he’s building a bridge, he wants them to know that he understands where they’re at, & where they’re coming from, because he’s been there.

He’s going to share who he was (his conduct) before Christ came into his life. He tells them that he was born in Tarsus, but brought up in *this city* (Jerusalem) at the feet of Gamaliel. He received his understanding & education in the law of Moses under one of the most prestigious rabbis of their day.... (Right now he’s gaining ground in their eyes, he’s gathering “street cred” as we might say 😊).

“Taught according to the strictness of our father’s law, & was *zealous* toward God (as you all are today).” “Hey, you’re ready to murder me today to try & honor the law... that’s pretty zealous.” Paul tells them he was like that. He wrote to the Philippians, he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee, according to outward conduct, kept the most minute details of the law & walked among the “spiritual elite” of his day.

You see how he’s stacking credentials? He wants them to understand he’s no flake. He’s a Jew, brought up in Jerusalem, trained by Gamaliel, a follower of the law, a representative of the Sanhedrin & a zealous persecutor of the church. He was so steeped, so anchored in Judaism, nothing short of a supernatural encounter w/J.C. could change his mind.

In Vs 4 he shares w/them that it was his agenda to erase Christianity (this way) from the face of the earth. That was the level of “zeal” that *he had*. That’s how immersed in this militant orthodox Judaism he was, for him to change, something radical had to take place... So convinced was he that followers of Jesus were blaspheming God that he didn’t care if you were a man or a woman, had a family to support or kids to feed.

He'd tear you from your home, deliver you to prison & when it came time to sentence you, he placed his vote for the death penalty... period.

He's telling them, "Look, you all tried to kill me, (& I get it), I succeeded in having all kinds of people killed. You fired & missed, I didn't." He says, "The high priest bears me witness, I wasn't even satisfied w/keeping Christians out of Jerusalem, I got papers that gave me jurisdiction as far as Damascus (150-200 miles away) to drag those who'd fled Jerusalem back to stand trial."

It's here that I pause and reflect just a bit upon the law of sowing & reaping. How many people did Paul place on trial for being a believer (in Jerusalem)? & Now here he is in that same place. How many people did he place in chains, & now here he is... in chains. **Jesus said, judge not, you won't be judged, forgive, you'll be forgiven, give & it will be given to you good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.**

Paul had brought suffering to many. & The Lord told him that He would show him how many things *he* must suffer for His name's sake. I'll just leave that for you to think about. Paul has put many in this place, & now here he stands, giving *his* defense.

### Vs 6-11

From his conduct to his conversion. As he journeyed to Damascus, about noon a heavenly light broke through & shined down around him... Do you see where Paul is going w/this? "I was just like you! But an up close & personal encounter w/J.C. changed my life!"

He said, "I heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' So I answered, 'who are You, Lord?' & He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom *you* are persecuting.'"

Paul was persecuting the Lord of Glory, the One shining brighter than the noon day sun! How is this so? He'd never before even *met* Jesus. Because, Christ is those who *believe* by the power of His Holy Spirit. In the book of Isaiah, we read, **"In all their affliction He was afflicted,"<sup>4</sup>**

What's the take home here (even though you may be at home)☺? Whatever action or attitude we take toward a believer, we take toward Jesus. Did you realize that? When we gossip about a brother or sister in Christ; Jesus takes that personally. When we embark on a character assassination campaign, or speak lies, or listen to rumors or whatever we do to those who belong to Jesus, we're essentially doing that to Jesus!

<sup>4</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Is 63:9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Paul talked about this to the Corinthians, you might write it down so you can read it later, 1 Cor 6:15-20. So when we persecute others (physically, emotionally, mentally etc) we're persecuting Jesus. By the same token when we *bless* others, we bless Jesus (again, Matt 25:31-46).

When we serve the body, the church, we're serving the Lord & God will not be a debtor to man, your reward will always outweigh your service... Be encouraged to be involved, serve your church body & in so doing serve the Lord (for you serve [Col 3:24] the Lord Christ) & God will bless your life both now & in eternity to come.

But notice how Paul affirmed the fact that Jesus of Nazareth wasn't the deceitful heretic that the religious leaders purported He was, but that He was alive, that Paul saw His glory & heard His voice. Instantly, he had to change his whole way of thinking (repentance) and give the risen Lord control of his life.

Which BTW is *always* one of the fingerprints of salvation upon a person's life. If you've had a true encounter w/J.C. the response is always the same, "What do you want me to do?" "Lord, what do you want *from* me, how do You want to *use* me. Here I am, have Your way in/through me."

& Just like w/Paul, the Lord will lead us one step at a time. "Arise & go into Damascus & you'll be given instructions from there." Paul has an audience w/the King of kings. Jesus will give him one of the most dynamic ministries in all of human history, but it starts w/obedience to one simple instruction.

Listen, time forbids us but do your research, whether it was Ab, or Paul, Peter on the rooftop (Acts 10) or Philip going to Gaza, it all started w/obedience to a single word of instruction.

When God was calling Ab, He didn't even tell *him where* to go, just "go", get out the land & I will lead you. Too often we're worried about what we *don't* know, what's important is that we obey what we *do* know... Let's not be occupied by what we *don't* know, let's be obedient to that which we *do* know. & Trust me, the Lord will lead you from there. But w/out faith it's impossible to please God (Heb 11:6). Take the step of faith... It's not uncommon for people to miss out on years, even a lifetime of being used by God because they won't act on the singular instruction He gives, they won't step out in faith...

Paul had been blind spiritually, now he's blind physically, but he's moving forward by faith & he came into Damascus.

Vs 12-16

Wow... what a testimony. Notice again what Paul does. He draws their attention to the man who ministered to him after this encounter. Ananias, “a devout man according to the law, who had a good testimony w/all the Jews that lived there.” & When Ananias came to him, what did he call him? “Brother”. & He attributes Paul’s incredible experience to, “The God of our fathers” (a very Jewish expression).

& He said, “Receive your sight” & immediately Paul looked up & saw him. He could see more clearly than ever before having seen “the Just [Righteous] One”

& Look at this phrase, “The God of our fathers has chosen you...” Question, was Paul looking for Jesus that day? No way, but Jesus was looking for him. Listen, you may be in a place whereby you’re tired of this life & you’re open *to* & seeking *after* God because you’re hoping to find answers. That’s great, because if you seek for Him, you will find Him when you search w/all your heart. But you may not really after God at all, doesn’t matter. God may be after you! & He knows right where you are & He knows how to get your attention.

But listen family, this is you! If you know J.C. God has chosen you, that *you* should know His will... (This is where you comment in all caps, “AMEN!” or “Praise God!” or “Hallelujah!” Somebody give God glory... **Because God has loved you, given Himself for you & chosen you to know that it’s by grace through faith in J.C. that you should be saved...**) That you would *see* the Righteous One, & hear His voice. Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, & they know Me & they follow Me & I give them eternal life...”

& It’s yours to be His witness (notice) to *all men* (this is the commission) of what you have seen & heard. Paul is doing that right now. & Tucked away there in that phrase “all men” includes Gentiles... He hasn’t said it out loud yet, but he will. **(Vs 16 read)**

Let me just say this & we’ll be done.

**He’s not talking about baptismal regeneration. It’s not water that washes away our sins, it’s the blood of J.C. (1 Jn 1:7). Water baptism is the outward demonstration of the inward transformation of the heart. It’s our identification w/the death & resurrection of Jesus.**

Ananias has already affirmed Paul’s salvation when he referred to him as a brother. Paul is already showing repentance & faith in changing his mind about Jesus & obeying His instruction to go to Damascus.

Ananias is simply exhorting him to follow through in his obedience unto baptism (more literally) *having* called upon the name of the Lord. Ladies & Gentlemen, that’s where it’s at. It’s the calling, not the baptizing that makes for the cleansing.

To the Romans Paul would write, *“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. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’”*<sup>5</sup>

That could be you, right here, right now, wherever this may find you. You can call *on* the Lord, believe *in* the Lord & be saved. Just come to Him now. & Tell Him who you are. Say, “Lord Jesus, I’m calling on You now, I turn from my sin, I trust in You. I surrender my problems & trust in Your promise, fill me with Your Holy Spirit & thank You for putting my name in Your book of life.”

If you prayed that, we’d love to know it, let us know & we’ll be glad to send you some resources to help you in your new walk/relationship w/J.C.

Family, thanks for joining us today, may the Lord richly bless you, may he renew & refresh you, may you trust in Him w/all your heart & shine bright for His glory.

### Prayer Points

God thank You for Your word, give us boldness, increase our faith & be glorified in our lives, in Jesus name we pray... Amen.

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<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ro 10:8-13] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.