

# ACTS

## Chapter 22

**“Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you.” 2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said: 3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day. 4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, 5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. 6 “As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. 7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ 8 And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ 9 Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. 10 And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.’ 11 And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. 12 “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing by me said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. 14 And he said, ‘The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; 15 for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’ 17 “When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance 18 and saw him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ 19 And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. 20 And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.’ 21 And he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”**

Paul addressed his contemporaries as “brothers,” his seniors as “fathers,” all of them as his countrymen. This was a respectful way in which to address people who had been trying to kill him. Paul did it for the gospel’s sake, in the hope of winning his countrymen to faith. (PBC)

Paul expresses his kinship with the angry Jews while giving deference to the Jewish leaders. Stephen’s address began the same way (7:2). (TLSB)

*defense. Gk apologia.* First of five such defenses Paul will make in Ac. (TLSB)

**22:2** *Hebrew.* Actually, if he had spoken in Hebrew, they would have become quieter in order not to miss a single word, because it would have been more difficult for them to understand. (CSB)

Luke adds this detail to show the mob's surprise at being addressed in their native language instead of in Gk, the common language of the day. (TLSB)

**22:3** *born in Tarsus.* Paul had citizenship in Tarsus (21:39) as well as being a Roman citizen. "No ordinary city" (21:39) was used by Euripides to describe Athens. Tarsus was 10 miles inland on the Cydnus River and 30 miles from the mountains, which were cut by a deep, narrow gorge called the Cilician Gates. It was an important commercial center, university city and crossroads of travel. (CSB)

*brought up in this city.* Paul must have come to Jerusalem at an early age. Another translation ("brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, being thoroughly trained according to the law of our fathers") would suggest that Paul came to Jerusalem when he was old enough to begin training under Gamaliel. (CSB)

Paul is raised and not only educated in Jerusalem. (Sacra) – Paul had what John Westerhoff calls "formation." Formation aids persons to acquire Christian faith (understood as a particular perception of life and our lives), Christian character (understood as identity and appropriate behavioral dispositions), and Christian consciousness (understood as the interior subjective awareness or temperament that predisposes persons to particular experiences). For example, Christian formation is the participation in and the practice of the Christian life of faith. (Schooling Christians – Hauerwas & Westerhoff)

*Gamaliel.* The most honored rabbi of the first century. Possibly he was the grandson of Hillel (see also 5:34–40). (CSB)

The Pharisees were known for their strict interpretation and observance of God's Law. (TLSB)

This was the man who had advised the Sanhedrin to wait and see whether the apostles' activity was of human or divine origin (5:34-40). (PBC)

*zealous for God.* Paul's zeal was shown in his persecution of Christians (cf Gal 1:13–14). (TLSB)

**22:4** *I persecuted the Way.* Paul later relates his approval of Stephen's death (v 20) and speaks of his approval of the execution of Christians (26:10). (TLSB)

That had happened almost twenty-five years before, but there were still men in the Council (the Sanhedrin) who would remember. The records of the Sanhedrin would also

show that this was true. No one could deny that Paul had been an extremely conscientious Jew, even a fanatic. (PBC)

**22:5** *high priest*. Caiaphas, the high priest over 20 years earlier, was now dead, and Ananias was high priest (see 23:2); but the records of the high priest would show Paul's testimony to be true. (CSB)

*letters to the brothers*. In this case, Paul describes fellow Jews, such as those he is currently addressing. (TLSB)

**22:6** *About noon*. A detail not included in the earlier account (9:1–22). (CSB)

The natural brightness of the day did not detract from the supernatural brightness. (TLSB)

**22:8** *Jesus of Nazareth*. The only one of the three accounts of Paul's conversion to include this self-description of Jesus (cf 9:1–19; 26:12–18). (TLSB)

**22:9** *did not understand the voice*. They heard the sound (9:7) but did not understand what was said. (CSB)

Although Paul's companions heard the voice, they did not understand what Jesus said. (TLSB)

**22:12** *Ananias ... devout man*. Important to this audience. (CSB)

Paul emphasizes Ananias's noble traits to appeal to his Jewish audience. (TLSB)

He was a devout observer of the law, not someone who was careless about Jewish teaching and practice. All the Jews living in Damascus held him in high esteem. (PBC)

**22:14–16** Paul quotes Ananias at greater length here than Luke records in 9:17, to assure his audience that the true God directed Ananias. (TLSB)

**22:14** *to see the Righteous One*. Cf. 3:14. To see the resurrected Jesus was all-important to Paul (see 26:16; 1Co 9:1; 15:8). It was that experience that had convinced him of the truth of the gospel and that became the foundation of his theology. (CSB)

Title for the Messiah (Is 53:11). (TLSB)

**22:15** *witness*. Like the other apostles, Paul could testify that he had seen the risen Lord (cf 1:22; 26:16; 1Co 9:1). (TLSB)

**22:16** *wash away your sins*.† By baptism, a sacrament through which the Holy Spirit bestows God's grace. (CSB)

Ananias vividly describes what Baptism does. Cf Lk 3:3; Eph 5:26; Ti 3:5. (TLSB)

*calling on His name.* Jesus' name encompasses everything revealed about Him in Scripture. (TLSB)

**22:17–21** Paul describes a vision he had when he went to Jerusalem three years after being converted (9:26–30; Gal 1:18). (TLSB)

**22:17** *When I returned to Jerusalem.* Refers to the visit described in 9:26; Gal 1:17–18. (CSB)

*in the temple, I fell into a trance.* See Peter's trance (10:10; 11:5; cf. 2Co 12:3). Paul was not a blasphemer of the temple but continued to hold it in high honor. (CSB)

**22:18** *Him.* From v 19, it is clear Paul refers to Jesus. (TLSB)

*they.* Jews in Jerusalem. (TLSB)

**22:19** *Lord.* Having been brought to faith, Paul addresses Jesus with the name of God from the OT. (TLSB)

**22:20** *Stephen Your witness.* Stephen had also seen the risen Lord (7:55) and thus was His witness. (TLSB)

*approving.* Does not necessarily mean that Paul had to be a member of the Sanhedrin, though some have thought so. He could show his approval by allowing them to put their cloaks at his feet. (CSB)

Cf v 4. Though Paul's physical role in Stephen's death may have been minimal, he emphasizes his guilt in the matter. (TLSB)

**22:21** Jesus echoes what He said to Ananias. Paul speaks about his own work in this way (Rm 11:13; Gal 2:7). (TLSB)

**21:37–22:21** Paul addresses an angry mob of Jews, vividly describing his life-changing encounter with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus as well as another time when Christ appeared to him. Pursuing your own agenda often leads to a dead end. But because Christ washes away your sin, like Paul you can pray, "What shall I do, Lord?" And you can be sure that your Lord will hear and guide you. • I praise You, Father, for Your infinite wisdom in sending Jesus as my Savior, and for bringing me into Your family through Your means of grace. Amen. (TLSB)

*Paul and the Roman Tribune*

**22** Up to this word they listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live." **23** And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust

**into the air, 24 the tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by flogging, to find out why they were shouting against him like this. 25 But when they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?” 26 When the centurion heard this, he went to the tribune and said to him, “What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen.” 27 So the tribune came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” And he said, “Yes.” 28 The tribune answered, “I bought this citizenship for a large sum.” Paul said, “But I am a citizen by birth.” 29 So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.**

**22:22** *up to* – What incensed them was the idea that the Lord God of Israel would send a zealous Jew to serve Gentiles when the Jews refused to hear. (PBC)

When Paul mentioned “the Gentiles” (v 21), the crowd was reminded of why they wanted him dead in the first place: for supposedly bringing Gentiles into the temple and defiling it. (TLSB)

They were like the Jewish leaders that Jesus addresses in Matthew 23:13: “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.”

**22:23** *throwing off cloaks and flinging dust* – This was the mob’s way of expressing horror at blasphemy. They believed that what they had heard from Paul’s mouth was just that. (PBC)

The crowd was ready to stone Paul on the spot (cf 7:58). (TLSB)

**22:24** *flogging him*. Not with the rod, as at Philippi (16:22–24), but with the scourge, a merciless instrument of torture. It was legal to use it to force a confession from a slave or alien but never from a Roman citizen. The scourge consisted of a whip of leather thongs with pieces of bone or metal attached to the ends. (CSB)

Such a method of interrogation was commonly used when slaves and foreigners were involved. See note, Mt 10:17. (TLSB)

The same instrument used on Jesus. In being called as witness to this Jesus, Paul was also called to suffering (9:16), suffering that increasingly looks like Jesus suffering. (Tannehill)

**22:25** *they had stretched him out*. The Greek word used for tying a person to a post for whipping. (CSB)

A prisoner being flogged was stripped to the waist and forced to bend over a low pillar with his feet and hands secured to the floor. (TLSB)

*Roman citizen.* According to Roman law, all Roman citizens were assured exclusion from all degrading forms of punishment: beating with rods, scourging, crucifixion. (CSB)

**22:28** *bought this...large sum.* There were three ways to obtain Roman citizenship: (1) receive it as a reward for some outstanding service to Rome; (2) buy it at a considerable price; (3) be born into a family of Roman citizens. How Paul's father or an earlier ancestor had gained citizenship, no one knows. By 171 B.C. a large number of Jews were citizens of Tarsus, and in the time of Pompey (106–48) some of these could have received Roman citizenship as well. Cf. 16:37. (CSB)

The tribune evidently doubted that a man such as he saw before him had the means to purchase a Roman citizenship, as he himself had done. (TLSB)

During the reign of Claudius it was possible to buy citizenship. To enter the regular army, even at the lowest rank it was necessary to be a citizen. To be an officer in the auxiliary army, made up of non-Roman troops, one had to be a citizen. For the sake of his military career and enjoy the rights of a Roman citizen, the commander had paid a considerable sum. (PBC)

**22:29** *tribune also was afraid* – He had violated Paul's civil rights. He could be punished severely for that, if the prisoner wanted to be vengeful about the matter. (PBC)

The tribune later lies to keep himself from getting in trouble for mistreating Paul. (TLSB)

**22:22–29** Paul's address does not avert the crowd's hatred. However, as a Roman citizen, he receives help from a Roman tribune. God established the governing authorities to bring a degree of peace and civil righteousness to our troubled world. However, our ultimate hope is in the Lord. Christ's Gospel brings eternal peace and righteousness before the highest court: heaven. • Lord Jesus, thank You for giving me righteousness before God. Teach me to forgive those who falsely accuse me. Help me also not to accuse anyone falsely. Amen. (TLSB)

*Paul Before the Council*

**30** **But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them.**

**22:30** *was unbound.* Paul was no longer bound, and presumably he would have been free completely if the Sanhedrin had not wished to detain him. (CSB)

*commanded.* “Summoned” might well capture the tone here. The tribune was probably seeking advice from the Jewish leaders concerning Paul's case. (TLSB)

*chief priests.* Those of the high priestly line of descent (mainly Sadducees), but the Sanhedrin now included a considerable number of Pharisees. These men constituted the ruling body of the Jews. The Jewish court was respected by the Roman governor, whose approval had to be obtained before sentencing to capital punishment. (CSB)