

I. Paul's Defense, Act 1: The Crowd (Acts 22)

- Paul is before the crowd and has been given permission to address them by the Roman commander. In Hebrew, Paul begins to address the crowd. He defines himself and his story:
 - Who am I? (cf. Philippians 3:5-6)
 - ✓ A Jew
 - ✓ Native of Tarsus
 - ✓ Strict student of the law under Gamaliel
 - ✓ Zealous man for God
 - What have I done?
 - ✓ Persecuted the "Way" to the death
 - ✓ Imprisoned people
 - ✓ Served as warrant officer/bounty hunter for the Council
- At this point, Paul relates the story of his conversion while on the way to carry out the work he just described. This account (as well as the third one in Acts 26) gives us more information than the first account in chapter 9. Some may see contradictions, but good study sweeps these away.
 - Acts 9:7 v. Acts 22:9: Luke states in chapter 9 that the men saw the light and heard the voice that was speaking to Saul. Some might say this is a contradiction, but perhaps it simply means the men heard the voice, but could not comprehend the language or the meaning. Paul indicates in Acts 22:14 that the voice was in Hebrew. It is not a stretch to think that Saul's companions only spoke Greek or Aramaic. The Greek word translated "hear" is the same one used by Jesus when describing the stubbornness of the Jewish leadership when they "heard" His voice, but did not "hear" the teaching.
 - Paul provides accolades for Ananias beyond the simple description of "disciple" given in Acts 9:10. It is no wonder that God chose Ananias, based upon Paul's description of his character: devout according to the law and a man of good testimony/reputation.
 - In Acts 22:14-15, Paul relates the conversation with Ananias where the latter describes the mission God has for Paul. This mission was described by God to Ananias in 9:15-16.
 - In 22:16, Ananias provides the reason that Saul should be baptized and what baptism accomplishes.
 - Paul relates a warning and direction from the Lord in 22:17-21 that we are not given in Acts 9. Three years after Paul's conversion (Galatians 1:18), he is in Jerusalem. The Lord informs him that the people there will reject his message and Paul will be sent to the Gentiles.
- This is the statement that gets them upset. Their prejudice against the Gentiles and Paul's compassion for them coupled with the rumors that Paul has been preaching to Jews abroad that the old law is invalid (21:21), stirs them up again.
- The Roman commander, likely not understanding the religious aspect of Paul's speech, assumes he is a troublemaker and prepares to question him under torture. As Paul is being prepared for scourging, he speaks up about the injustice about to happen: a Roman citizen is about to be whipped without due process. When he learns this, the commander halts the process. To begin to sort out what is going on, the commander orders an assembly of the Sanhedrin to hear Paul's story.

II. Paul's Defense, Act 2: The Sanhedrin (Acts 23)

- Paul testifies as to the state of his conscience. He feels as if he has lived his life correctly with an attitude of doing what is right before God. We see in II Timothy 1:3 that Paul retains this feeling all the way to the end of his work. Paul persecuted Christians because he believed he was doing what was right. Based upon I Corinthians 15:9, he regrets his actions and knows they were sinful, although committed in ignorance (cf. Acts 3:14-17; I Timothy 1:12-16).
- His statement prompts the high priest Ananias to have Paul struck. Paul provides a sharp and accusatory rebuke (and a correct one, see Deuteronomy 25:1-4). Upon learning who he has rebuked, Paul humbly apologizes with great humility, invoking scripture (Septuagint translation of Exodus 22:28 says that you should not "speak evil", translations from the Masoretic text says "curse").
- Paul deflects attention from himself by cunningly starting an argument regarding resurrection between the Pharisees and Sadducees. Oddly enough, at the conclusion, the Pharisees are ready to acquit one of their own. This further riles the group and the commander removes Paul, fearing he will be harmed.

- The Lord speaks to Paul that night and provides the apostle assurances that his journey to Jerusalem will not be the end of the line. Paul will bear the Gospel to Rome.
- Dedicated as they are to Paul's demise, over 40 men take a "great" oath (Greek word is "anathema", translated most places as "accursed") to not eat (v. 21 also says drink) until they kill Paul. The conspirators inform the Council, but apparently not too covertly, as Paul's nephew learns of the plot. The Council and Elders are in on the deal and are to request Paul be brought back before them. The conspirators plan an ambush.
- After the nephew informs Paul, Paul hurriedly sends him to share the information with the Roman commander. Upon hearing the details of the plot, the Roman commander decides to relocate Paul to Caesarea. The commander arranges for an unusually large guard force to escort Paul. 470 soldiers are to protect Paul for the journey, including 70 cavalry, 200 light infantry and 200 heavy infantry. They are to depart in the late evening, around 9:00 p.m.
- The commander is sending Paul to the Judean procurator Marcus Antonius Felix (ruled 52-58 A.D.). The commander sends along with the contingent, a detailed (and ostentatious) letter to the procurator about Paul, the situation, and Lysias' slightly embellished handling of the matter. Interestingly enough, we finally learn the commander's name from the salutation of the letter. Claudius Lysias means "lame releaser" in Latin.
- The convoy makes it to Antipatris (city built by Herod the Great in honor of his father, Antipater) that night. The next day, the infantry return to Jerusalem while Paul proceeds with the cavalry to Caesarea. Upon his arrival and delivery to Felix, the procurator reads the letter and confines Paul until the accusers can be summoned to Caesarea.

III. Paul's Defense, Act 3 (Acts 24)

- 5 days later, Ananias and his entourage arrive in Caesarea. They have brought along their "lawyer", an accomplished speaker named Tertullus (from his name, a Roman, not a Jew). After a flattering greeting to Felix, Tertullus describes Paul as a:
 - ✓ Plague (pest, disease)
 - ✓ Creator of dissention throughout the Jews of the Roman world
 - ✓ Leader of new religious sect
 - ✓ Profaner of Jewish Temple
- Tertullus seems to also misrepresent Claudius Lysias' actions in rescuing Paul from the mob. In verse 7, he states that Lysias took Paul with "great violence", a description not in line with the previous narrative. The Jewish group standing before Felix agrees with these statements.
- Paul, after giving due and brief respect to Felix's authority as judge over the province, begins explaining the situation:
 - ✓ Paul has been in the area only 12 days, perhaps 5 of those days in Caesarea, inferring that in this short time, how much trouble could he have caused?
 - ✓ He denies inciting the crowd or disputing with anyone in the Temple or area synagogues.
 - ✓ His accusers have no proof of their accusations
 - ✓ Paul will simply confess to:
 1. Worshipping God
 2. Believing the scriptures
 3. Having a hope in resurrection
 4. Caring enough to bring back gifts for the poor from his journey
- Paul correctly clarifies that it is Jews from "out of town" that have stirred up these accusations about him. He states that it is those Jews who should be standing there before Felix as eyewitnesses. The Jews from Jerusalem cannot testify about what Paul has done outside of Judea. Paul summarizes by stating the real reason the Jews are against him: preaching the resurrection from the dead.
- Felix defers any decision about Paul's case until Lysias can be summoned to testify. There is indication in the scripture that Felix possesses some knowledge of Christianity. Paul is placed under a very loose arrest and is allowed visits from friends and some amount of freedom. We don't know whether Lysias ever came, or was even summoned.
- After an unspecified amount of time, Felix and his "Jewish" wife, Drusilla (daughter of Herod Agrippa I) send for Paul to hear more about the Way. They find difficulty in accepting the truth regarding righteousness and the impending judgment of the Almighty. Paul is sent away, but called back before Felix periodically. Felix's desire seems to be that Paul may offer him more than just the Gospel. He is hoping for a bribe from the apostle.
- Paul continues to be restrained in Caesarea for two years, remaining bound as a favor from Felix to the Jews. Porcius Festus (59-62 A.D.) succeeds Felix as procurator of Judea.