

Acts 22

As is recorded in chapter 21, Paul was seized and, but for the intervention of Roman authorities, would have been killed by the Jews. That intervention spared his life but left him in chains for the balance of the account of his life, as Luke records it, in Acts. From this point in his life until the final verse of chapter 28 is a period of some 4-5 years.

Paul had asked permission of the chief captain to address the mob and this chapter is his address to them. It is his defense, given from the stairs into the castle (21:37, 40). Paul spoke in the Hebrew tongue which calmed down the feelings of the mob somewhat (22:2). In his address to them, he related how opposed he was to Christians and how he had obtained letters from the elders to Jews in Damascus to ferret out those who had embraced the new religion. He told how that on his journey he heard an unknown voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (22:7). The fact that Paul said, "Who art thou, Lord?" indicates that Paul did not realize that it was Jesus speaking to him. True, Paul called him "Lord" but this was a customary salutation for one of inferior rank to address another of superior rank.

Verse nine "and they that were with me beheld the light but they heard not the voice of him that spoke unto me" is sometimes seen by some as contradictory to what Luke earlier had written in his account of Paul's conversion. "And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the Voice, but beholding no man" (9:7). Paul gives the key. The Voice spoke to him in the Hebrew tongue. Those with him heard the sound but didn't understand what the Voice was saying. Paul's next question was "What shall I do, Lord?" to which the response was "Arise, and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do" (22:10).

Paul then told how Ananais had come to him, restored his sight, and said, "The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for him of what thou hast seen and heard." Paul wrote the Corinthians that Christ had been raised and had appeared "...and last of all, as to a child untimely born, he appeared to me also" (1 Cor. 15:8). His selection to be Christ's witness was made from his mother's womb, (Gal. 1:15).

Ananais restored Paul's sight, informed him of God's plans for him, and

then commanded him to "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (22:16). This is a significant passage because 1) it tells that although Paul had seen the Lord, that had not saved him, (any more than Cornelius seeing an angel had saved him, 11:13f) for he still had sins to "wash away". 2) It links water baptism together with salvation just as Jesus and Peter had earlier said, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38f. 3) It shows how one is to "call upon the name of the Lord". Joel had prophesied that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord 'shall be saved'" (Joel 2:30; Acts 2:21). Peter had commanded his listeners to "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins..." and Ananais told Paul that in baptism he would "call upon the name of the Lord" (22:16). When one does anything the Lord commands for whatever benefit may accrue from the complying with that command, he is "calling on the name (authority) of the Lord."

As Paul continued the narrative of his conversion, he hastened over some events that immediately followed his conversion as earlier recorded by Luke. He told of his return to Jerusalem from Damascus but in doing so, he omitted relating his visit to Arabia and return to Damascus before he did go to Jerusalem. He had left the city to hunt down and punish Christians but his return to the city was in the role of a confirmed disciple of Jesus. That period between leaving and returning to Jerusalem was about three years (Gal. 1:15-18). The omission of these events was not a denial of them, just an abbreviation of them for they were not pertinent to the points he wished to impress upon his accusers.

Critical to Paul's defense was the Lord's instruction to leave Jerusalem "because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning me" (22:18). Paul remonstrated with the Lord, reminding the Lord (as if the Lord needed reminding) that "they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: and when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him" (22:19f). But the Lord had said "Depart, for I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles" (22:21). God knew his people better than Paul. He knew his people would not receive Paul's testimony concern Him then, just as his testimony was not received by Jews as Paul stood before them now. Paul's accusers had listened quietly to him until they heard him say God had sent him to the Gentiles! This triggered a violent reaction! "And they gave him audience unto this word: and they lifted up their voice, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live" (Acts 22:22f). Paul had, in their estimation, committed an

unthinkable crime. He had said that God actually wanted to save the Gentiles! How could this be?, they reasoned. THEY were God's chosen people, THEY were Abraham's seed. This egotism showed forth when they said of Paul, "It is not fit that he should live".

To this point the chief captain had silently stood by. He had watched as Paul, speaking in the Hebrew tongue, had calmed their cries and hoarse shouts. He watched as they had listened passively for however long Paul addressed them. And suddenly, all fury was unleashed! Shouts, casting garments and dust into the air brought him to sharp attention. What had this prisoner of his said that so infuriated his antagonists? He did not know, but he purposed to find out.

The "...chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, bidding that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know for what cause they so shouted against him." (22:24). The chief captain did not understand Hebrew; he did not understand that the mob cried out because Paul had dared to suggest that Gentiles like him were loved by God and that God had made provisions for their salvation and selected Paul as His apostle to them. Had he understood, he would not have commanded Paul's scourging.

"Scourging" was terrible punishment and Paul intended to spare himself from it since he had the available preventive. Speaking to the soldier who was preparing him for such an ordeal, he said "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (22:25). Immediately the centurion sought the chief captain and said: "What art thou about to do? for this man is a Roman. And the chief captain came and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? And he said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this citizenship. And Paul said, But I am a Roman born." (22:26f). The scourging proceeded no further, Paul was left in bonds, and those (including the chief captain) who had bound and almost scourged him were greatly concerned because of not only what they had done, but also what they had almost done (22:29).

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