

# Acts 21:28-22:16

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[ 0 : 00 ] 21. Acts chapter 21.

Paul has arrived at Jerusalem against the wishes of his friends and traveling companions. When he said he was going to Jerusalem, they immediately tried to say, no, bad things are going to happen if you go there.

But Paul was determined. He felt like the Lord was leading him in that direction. And so now he has arrived in Jerusalem. And one of the first places he goes is he goes and meets with the brethren in Jerusalem.

James, who is the half-brother of Jesus, is kind of the lead pastor, the lead elder at the church of Jerusalem. And he meets with James and the other elders to give report of what God is doing among the Gentiles through Paul's ministry, how they are being converted, how they're coming to faith in Christ.

And so Paul has spent a lot of time preaching to Gentiles. He spent a lot of time in Ephesus. He spent a lot of time in Corinth. So he's been seeing Gentile conversions. And he is reporting back to the church in Jerusalem what has been happening through his ministry.

[ 1 : 23 ] And so then James reports to him how that Jews are being told that Paul is telling other Jews to kind of ignore the law and not have your children circumcised and all that.

And so he said, here's the way you can kind of pacify their anger. So he gets Paul to agree to go through the days of purification with these men that are coming off of a Nazarite vow.

There was a way that you start a Nazarite vow. There are things you do while you're on it. And then there's a way that you complete it. There are things you had to do at the end. And part of that involved seven days of purification.

And so Paul agreed to go through that with them. And it's at this time that the seven days are almost ended. And then the Jews from Asia, verse 27.

And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people and laid hands on him. So the Jews have found he was there.

[ 2 : 21 ] And that was James' big concern. You know, when all the Jews find out you're here, how are they going to respond? You know, they're going to come here once they know you're here. And so that's happened.

And they come and lay hands on Paul. And this is a forceful laying on of hands. This is, we're taking you outside and we're literally going to beat him to death.

And so notice what the charges are. We'll start reading. Verse 27 is where we left off a couple weeks ago. Verse 28, we'll start there. So crying out, men of Israel, help.

This is the man that teaches all men everywhere against the people and the law and this place. And further brought Greeks also into the temple and hath polluted this holy place.

For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus and Ephesians, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple. And all the city was moved.

[ 3 : 17 ] And the people ran together and they took Paul and drew him out of the temple and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar, who immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down unto them.

And when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. Then the chief captain came near and took him and commanded him to be bound with two chains and demanded who he was and what he had done.

And some cried one thing, some another, and among the multitude. And when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. And when he had come upon the stairs, so it was that he was born of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

For the multitude of the people followed after him, crying away with him. And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, may I speak unto thee, who said, canst thou speak Greek?

Are not thou that Egyptian, which before these days made us an uproar and led us out into the wilderness, four thousand men that were murderers? But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a city, a citizen of no mean city.

[ 4 : 35 ] And I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying.

And so Paul has been captured in the temple. They have laid their hands on him. They have drug him out of the temple. Now think about the accusations they brought against Paul.

Verse 28, crying out, men of Israel, help. This is the man that teaches all men everywhere against the people and the law and this place. And further brought Greeks also into the temple and hath polluted this holy place.

Notice the first accusation. He teaches everywhere against the people, against the Jews, and the law and this place.

Have you heard those three accusations put to one man before? Back in Acts chapter 6, Stephen was guilty of some of those same things. And Jesus was convicted of those same things.

[ 5 : 45 ] And so this is not a new strategy. This is the same thing kind of repeating itself. Also, talking about Stephen, we'll see more parallels with the story of Stephen and with Jesus' trial.

We'll see some parallels with those as we go through. And further brought Greeks also into the temple and hath polluted this holy place. And notice verse 29.

So they didn't have evidence. They weren't sure. They just saw Paul and Trophimus together and they assumed Paul took him into the temple.

So they're going based on assumption here. They're not going on facts. They're not going on eyewitness accounts. They're going everything they're doing. Their anger, their frustration right now against Paul is mostly based on assumption.

They don't know that it's true or not. They're just assuming. And so to think about this, the temple, the way it was structured is outside of the temple, you had what was called the court of Israel.

[ 6 : 48 ] If you were a Jew, you could go there. The only people that could go from there into the temple itself were Levites. You had to be part of the priesthood before you could go into the actual temple. But outside the temple, the court of Israel, if you were a Jew, you were allowed to go there.

Well, outside the court of Israel, you had the court of women and you had the court of the Gentiles. If you were a Gentile, you could not go beyond that line that divided that from the main temple area where the court of Israel was.

Now you're starting to see the visual of when Paul said in Ephesians 2, that dividing wall has been brought down and now Jews and Gentiles can be together. Because there was actually a place where Gentiles could not go beyond.

Only if you were a Jew, you could go. In fact, archaeologists have uncovered writings and things from the temple area that warn Gentiles.

If you basically saying, if you go beyond this point, you're responsible for your own death. And since it was against their religious beliefs, against their law, the Romans let them carry out the sentence.

[ 7 : 54 ] It was said by Josephus, a historian who was alive at this time, that even a Roman citizen that was a Gentile, if he went beyond where Gentiles were supposed to go, the Romans would actually let the Jewish people carry out that death sentence on a Roman citizen.

So they were serious about this. If you went into the temple and you were a Gentile, you could be put to death and you would be put to death. And so they are thinking Paul took him into the temple.

One commentator has said the odds of Trophimus just wandering in on accident, you have about the same chances of wandering into the Kremlin, into their private rooms just to do sightseeing.

They said you have about that much chance of wandering into there as he would have had of just wandering into the temple area where they accused him of being. But again, remember, they're going off of supposition.

They're going off of assumption. No one has seen this. They're just assuming. And so this would have, in their minds, here you have a Greek, a Gentile in the temple area.

[ 9 : 03 ] The temple has now been defiled. And so that would be their thing. And this would be the one thing that would unite the Jewish people. The Jewish people, they would have their infightings and their divisions.

But one thing that would bring them together was here's a Gentile in the temple area. We got it. Here's the man responsible. We got to take care of this. And so that would have brought them together. And so they drew Paul out of the temple.

The doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him. So they were going to beat him to death. That's basically what was going to happen. And so since this is causing an uproar, it got the attention of the Romans.

Now the Romans, the one job that the Roman soldiers around that area had to do was to keep riots from happening. You didn't want that to happen. Anything that looked like a riot, anything that was going to get out of control, that needed to be pressed down quickly.

Or else other people would get involved and it would not be good. It would just get worse as it snowballed. And so they are going to do that. The temple where it was located, on the northwest corner of the temple, there would be the fortress Antonia, named after the great military leader Mark Antony.

[ 10 : 16 ] But this would have housed as many as possibly a thousand Roman soldiers. At the time. In fact, the word chief captain comes from the word giving the idea of a guard or captain over a thousand.

So there would probably be at least a thousand Roman troops there right on the temple mount. Because you think about at this time, remember a couple of chapters ago, Paul said he wanted to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost.

Pentecost was one of the pilgrimage feasts where all the men would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. So at this time, Jerusalem would be overrun with people. The population would have been increased.

No doubt the soldiers would be on alert anyway because of situations like this could develop. And so they went and get the soldiers and Paul is taken. He's rescued by the Roman soldiers.

And then you come to verse 34 and the captain is trying to figure out what's happening. Some are saying one thing, some are saying the other, and he can't figure out what's going on because part of the crowd is saying one thing, part of the crowd is saying another.

[ 11 : 23 ] This is similar, remember, to what happened in Ephesus where they all went into the Colosseum and no one knew, a lot of people didn't even know why they were there. Some people were saying one thing, some people were saying another thing, and some people just were there because that's where everybody else went.

And they had no idea what was going on. So this is kind of that same thing, but this is all directed at Paul. This is a mob mentality. They want to kill this man.

And they are ready to do so and would have already done it had the Romans not intervened. And so they got him into the castle that would be the Antonia Fortress.

And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was born of the soldiers for the violence of the people. The people were swarming at him to the point the soldiers had to carry him where they were going to take him.

And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee, who said, Canst thou speak Greek? And so they were amazed that here's Paul.

[ 12 : 25 ] He's able to speak Greek. And so because the person, the chief captain thinks he's some Egyptian that caused trouble years ago.

That's what the next verse is all about. This is the chief captain still speaking. Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days made us an uproar, and led us out into the wilderness, 4,000 men that were murderers.

And so if you read Josephus, he has an account of this man. Apparently he was some type of false prophet that prophesied that, you know, he could speak the word and like the walls of Jerusalem would fall down.

It was kind of a weird situation. But he was anyway a false prophet that had gathered a following like a lot of false prophets do. And they were going to cause trouble. And so the Romans took care of them before they could start trouble.

But the leader escaped. And so this chief captain is thinking maybe Paul's this guy. Maybe this is why they're after him. But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus.

[ 13 : 24 ] Now that's going to perk their ears up because Tarsus was a very important city. Only Alexandria and Athens were more well known for their education. And they're just being part of the academia in that day than Tarsus.

So it was ranked up there with them. A city of Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city. Basically Paul said, Tarsus is not just your average city.

It's not a mean city. It's not your average city. And I beseech thee, suffer me to speak to the people. Now the fact that he's going to let Paul speak to the people means that Paul is convincing one.

And the fact that Paul is speaking Greek will let him know that, yes, this guy's probably educated. This guy probably knows what he's talking about, so I'll give him a chance.

And so Paul motions to the people with a hand gesture to kind of silence the people. And then notice how he starts in chapter 22, verse 1. Men, brethren, and fathers.

[ 14 : 23 ] It's interesting, Stephen started his speech in chapter 7 with those same three words. Or same four words. Men, brethren, and fathers. So he's starting his speech just like Stephen would.

Hear ye my defense, which I make now unto you. Now this word defense, you'll read this same word in scripture in other places. But it's going to sound different.

In 1 Peter 3.15, be ready always to give an answer. For the reason of the hope that's in you. That word answer there is the same word translated defense here.

It's the Greek word apologion, where we get our word apology or apologetic from. And so Paul is saying, hear my defense. Hear my apologetic.

Here's my reason for what's happening here. And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence. And he says, I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God as ye all are this day.

[ 15 : 36 ] So Paul is telling them, I was one of you. I was just like one of you. I was well educated. I was, in fact, the word brought up in the city, that term brought up is the same word that's often translated educated.

So Paul was educated in the city of Jerusalem. He was brought up in the city of Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, the most respected rabbi of that time. That's today's equivalent of Harvard Law School.

That would be like going there. It would be very prestigious. It would carry a lot of weight. The fact that Paul could say, I was taught by Gamaliel, I sat at his feet, meaning I was one of his students.

I was one of his disciples. And taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God as ye are all this day. And I persecuted this way.

You'll find that a lot of the older literature referred to Christianity as the way. That was what it was called years ago. It was the way, and Paul said, I persecuted this way.

[ 16 : 38 ] So I was persecuting the Christians just as they're wanting to persecute him, basically. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. Notice verse 5.

And as also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders, from whom I also received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem for it to be punished.

Paul was appealing to the same high priest. He's like, just talk to the high priest. He'll tell you. The same one was still in charge at this time. And so Paul was recounting how he was headed to Damascus to go bring people in that were Christians.

And it came to pass that as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell into the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid. But they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

[ 17 : 46 ] And so a lot of controversy has happened with that verse. People try to say, see, there was a contradiction. No, the people with him heard something. But they could not hear with understanding.

They didn't understand. They didn't hear what the voice was saying. They didn't say they didn't hear anything. They didn't hear. Basically, they didn't understand what the voice was saying to Paul. So there's no contradiction there.

And it says, And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus. And there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

And when I could not see for the glory of that light being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came unto Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, came unto me and stood and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight.

And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that just one, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

[ 18 : 52 ] For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Now verse 16 has also caused some controversy. People say, See there, baptism washes away your sin. No, that's not what that said. What washed away his sin was calling upon the name of the Lord.

Baptism is just a picture of your sins being washed away. But his sins were washed away when he called upon the name of the Lord. And for proof of that, this is an account of chapter 9, his conversion experience.

Go back to chapter 9 and read it. Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit before he was baptized. And so the only way you can be filled with the Holy Spirit is if you're born again. And that happened to Paul before his baptism.

And so don't let the wording mess you up there. And in fact, the word calling on the name of the Lord, that phrase is in the, it's what's called the aorist tense.

[ 19 : 51 ] Meaning it's a one-time event, completed action. So another way we could say this is be baptized and wash away thy sins since thou has called on the name of the Lord.

Would be another way of saying the same thing. So calling on the name of the Lord is what washed away his sin. Baptism just pictures that. And so Paul is giving his testimony.

He's recounting exactly what happened in Acts chapter 9 of his conversion experience. How he was going to Damascus. He was going with the intent of killing Christians.

But when he gets there, he's now one of them. And you can, you can understand the apprehension from these people of wanting to accept him. Like, yeah, we, we're not going to fall for that. But Ananias went and laid hands on him, called him brother Saul.

He received his sight as a result. And then from there, he goes back, later on he'll go back to Jerusalem. And again, they're, they're kind of iffy about him.

[ 20 : 54 ] They're not wanting to accept him right in because they know who he was. And that's when Barnabas steps in and introduces Paul as, as one of them. And so Paul is recounting his, his testimony.

And there'll be multiple times in scripture you'll see Paul's conversion testimony. Acts chapter 9, Luke is given the account as it actually happened, or the history of the account as it would have happened from Paul's perspective.

And then you come to this chapter, Paul is giving his testimony to a Jewish, a Jewish audience. In chapter 26, Paul is going to give his testimony to a Roman audience, a Gentile audience.

In Philippians 3, Paul is going to recount his testimony and he's going to give this to a Christian audience. So Jew, Gentile, and Christian have all been given the testimony of Paul in the inspired preserved scriptures that we have.

And so Paul is, has given his testimony and now he's going to recount a previous experience in Jerusalem. But here Paul has given his, his salvation testimony and just a couple of things about his conversion and we'll wrap up for today.

[ 22 : 04 ] Paul was very religious. Paul was very wicked at the same time. In fact, Paul said in one of his letters to Timothy, he said, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief.

So Paul called himself the chief of sinners. He viewed himself as that sinful, as that bad because of the things that he had done. And then if you look in Philippians 3, if you read Paul's account of his testimony there, concerning the law, he had this zeal concerning the law where no one could put a finger on his character.

Concerning the law and the righteousness that would come from trying to obey the law, Paul was blameless. So no one could accuse him of being a lawbreaker because he tried, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

He was determined to obey the law. In fact, he thought going after these Christians was upholding the punishments offered by the law of God. And he really thought he was doing God's service by bringing these people in to have them tried and maybe even put to death.

He thought he was doing God's service. So concerning the law, blameless, very religious. From the outside, he would be looked at as a model person.

[ 23 : 20 ] He was a Pharisee. He would be someone, if you were trying to follow Jewish law and Jewish tradition, he would be someone you looked up to. And so Paul's testimony tells us two things.

The fact that he views himself as the chief of sinners, Paul's testimony tells us that there's no one beyond the grace of God. If he's the chief of sinners, there's no one that's went so far the grace of God can't save.

So if you've got a loved one or if you've got a friend or if you've got someone that you're concerned about and you think, well, could they have went too far? Have they been too bad? Have they done something that maybe God won't save them?

No, they haven't. No one has went so far that God's grace can't reach them. God's grace can save the vilest of sinners. Also, Paul's conversion tells us something else.

That's from Paul's perspective of being the chief of sinners. But let's think about Paul, the religious sinner, who was this law-abiding citizen. First, we learned that Paul shows us the grace of God can save anyone.

[ 24 : 21 ] There's no one outside of the reach of grace. The next thing Paul shows us is there's no one good enough that they don't need God's grace. Paul shows us both of those things. The fact that he's the chief of sinners and God saved him says no one's beyond the reach of God's grace.

The fact that he was religious and a law keeper, he tried not to break the law. He tried to keep the law. He tried to get everything about the righteousness of the law. He tried to live by that.

He tried to, he was, if good works got people in, he would be there. But in Philippians 3, he said, I count all of that as dung. I count all of that as rubbish, garbage.

I count all of that as waste so that I can know Christ. He said, I can't depend on that righteousness. I need a righteousness that comes from God by faith. And so Paul shows us that there's no one so bad they can't be saved.

There's no one so good that they don't need to be saved. So Paul shows us both of those things. And so he, even in his, before he could get saved, before he could really experience that conversion, he had to realize all that works righteousness he had tried to obtain was nothing.

[ 25 : 32 ] He had to lay that aside and by faith, trust Christ for a righteousness that comes, comes from him. And that's, that's going to make the difference. You stand before God, either trusting in your own righteousness or you stand before God, trusting in the righteousness that he provides you by faith.

It's the righteousness of Christ. But a lot of people think, you know, I can, I can keep the law. I can, I can be good. I can do, I can do good works.

I can do this or that to, to get God's favor. Not understanding that for a work to be good, it's got to be empowered by the spirit and it's got to be done for the motive of glorifying God in order for it to even be a good work.

But you think about somebody's trying to get to heaven on their good works. Somebody's trying to get to heaven on their own, their own righteousness. Well, the standard is high.

The standard is perfection. You got to have a perfect righteousness to get to heaven. We don't have that. We can't get that from the law. In fact, a lot, where a lot of people go wrong is I'm going to keep the law.

[ 26 : 34 ] I'm going to obey the 10 commandments. The law was not given to save you. The law was given to condemn you. The law was given to show you that you can't be good enough doing it that way to go to heaven.

Because if you break one thing, you're guilty of it all. And that's the whole purpose of the Sermon on the Mount. Remember, Jesus said, you have heard it said of old time, thou shalt not kill.

He said, if you hate your brother, that's murder. Or if you've heard it said not to commit adultery, if you look on a woman's lust after her, you've committed adultery with her already in your heart, meaning you're an adulterer, you've broken the whole law of God, and you haven't really committed an action, you've just had a wrong thought.

So it's not just what you do, it's your thoughts, it's your motives, it's everything has to be perfect if you're going to keep the law perfectly enough to gain God's favor. That's impossible.

Only one person could do that, and that was Jesus. And so we stand before God needing righteousness that's not our own. We've got to have somebody else's. And Paul said, I need that righteousness that comes from God by faith.

[ 27 : 39 ] In other words, I need to be justified by faith. Justification means you're standing in God's courtroom, and the gavel drops down, and he says, not guilty. That's what it means to be justified.

And how can we do that? Because we're guilty sinners. How can we be justified? Because of Christ. Because of what he's done. That's why it was important that our sin be put on Jesus.

And he go to the cross bearing our sin, because what happened after that? The wrath of God come down upon that sin that was on Christ. So he endured our punishment for us. So now because of that, because God's justice has been satisfied in the death of his son, and he rose him from the dead, now we can be justified, and God can be absolutely just, maintain his perfect character while saying we're not guilty.

And why are we not guilty? Because of what Jesus did. And so that's what it takes to go to heaven. A righteousness that comes from God by faith. We don't work for it. We don't do anything to earn it.

The only way we can get it is to realize that we're helpless. That without it, we have no hope. And so I heard J. Vernon McGee preaching. I was listening to one of his sermons this week.



[ 28 : 51 ] And he said, God's not asking us to do something. He's asking us to believe something. He's asking us to trust in something he's already done. And that's it. That's the gospel. Death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Realizing he did it for your sin, for my sin. He did it in my place. He did it in your place. And when you trust that as your one and only way of getting to heaven, that's salvation.

It's been said that, you know, you take people that want to earn their own way. That's insulting the character of God. You're saying, what Jesus did wasn't necessary. I'm going to do it my own way.

Or what Jesus did wasn't enough. I've got to add some works to it. So you see the seriousness of just saying, well, I'm going to do this. What you're saying is, what Jesus did, that was good.

But I've got to add my works to it. So what Jesus did really wasn't enough to get me to heaven. I've got to add my works to it. That's an insult to the character of God. And so you've got to be careful with that.

[ 29 : 49 ] It's by faith, by faith alone, in what he has done. Salvation is a work of the Lord. Let's pray. Father, we thank you. Thank you. Okay.

Father, I'll talk to you later. Sabbath. To the Father.