



Acts

Lesson 21. Chapter 22

“I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are the Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from who is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.” Romans 9:1-5

These words express the love that Paul had for his people. Though he was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles, his heart yearned for the Jews to accept Jesus as their Messiah. In any new area of his travels he usually went first to the synagogue hoping to win his Jewish brethren to the truth. Throughout his ministry endeavors, however, the people he loved the most radically opposed his message.

After completing his third missionary journey in Acts 21, Paul arrived in Jerusalem. He had been warned by the Lord and many people that danger awaited him there, and that is exactly what he found. In response to false accusations, a mob took Paul and proceeded to beat him to death in the street. Fortunately, the Romans kept good surveillance over the city and stopped the violence. They put Paul under arrest and escorted him to the barracks to determine his identity and the truth regarding his crime. Paul requested to speak to the crowd of his accusers and was allowed to do so.

In Acts 22:1-21, Paul presents his defense to the people based on two major points that would counter the two accusations made against him. The first is that he is indeed a loyal Jew. This can be testified to by the fact of his heritage, education, and zealotry toward the Jewish faith seen in his fervent efforts to persecute those who opposed it. His behavior before his conversion should convince anyone who doubted his sincerity and dedication to God and Judaism. His second point was that his present conviction regarding the gospel was not brought about by some exaggerated, mystical event that he had concocted in his own mind. His encounter with the risen Christ could be testified to by his traveling companions on the road to Damascus, as well as by Ananias whose own experience corroborated Paul's.

The people listened to Paul's defense until he related his call to go to the Gentiles because the Jew's had rejected his message. At that point the people once again respond with great hostility. Because of the ensuing chaos, Paul is returned to the barracks where the Romans intend to prompt a confession by beating him. When the commander finds out Paul is a Roman citizen, and that he had nearly been scourged unlawfully, he releases him to the Jewish leadership to let them deal with him. Once again Paul finds himself defending himself to his own people.

READ CHAPTER 22

1. *Who was Gamaliel (Acts 5:34-35), and why would using his name be a part of Paul's defense?*

2. *What did Paul mean by the phrase "zealous for God" (vs.3) in regard to his old life, and what would that phrase mean to him now in his conversion?*

3. *Describe Paul's experience on the road to Damascus from verses 6-11. Compare that to the description in Acts 9:3-9. What differences are there in the two accounts?*

4. *What information does Acts 9:26-30 add to Paul's first experience in Jerusalem after his conversion that he relates in 22:17-21?*

5. *What caused the crowd to become violent again, and why do you think they responded this way?*

6. *How does Paul escape the beating they intended to give him?*

7. *Read Acts 16:15-24. Why do you think Paul didn't use his citizenship as an escape in this instance?*

Prayer requests:

Group time notes:
