

## *Acts of the Apostles - Chapter 22 (NIV)*

**22 1 “Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.”**

**2 When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet.**

Remember at the end of Chapter 21, the Roman commander allowed Paul to speak in his defense. It is doubtful that the Jewish leaders wanted him to speak because they wanted him dead.

“Paul gave a magnificent defense. He actually used the word ‘defense’ (Acts 22:1). In Greek, it is the word *apologia*, from which we get our word ‘apology.’ It refers to a formal defense of one’s past life or actions.” (Boice)

He speaks in Hebrew, probably out of respect for where he was and who he was speaking to, as well as to show that he was a Jew

***Then Paul said: 22:3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. 4 I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, 5 as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.***

Paul gives them his bio. He says:

- a. I am indeed a Jew.
- b. Born in Tarsus of Cilicia (outside the Promised Land).
- c. Brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel.
- d. Taught according to the strictness of our fathers’ Law.
- e. Was zealous toward God as you all are today.

Paul drops the name of Rabbi Gamaliel. We have heard about him in Acts 5:33-34.

***29 Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings! . . . 33 When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. 34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. “***

It tells them that he was taught in Jerusalem by a Pharisee, a teacher of the Law held in respect by all the people. Paul tells them about how he persecuted early Christians, even putting them to death. He includes how he was commissioned to go to Damascus to arrest more believers of the Way.

***22:6 “About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’***

***8 “Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.***

***“ I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied.9 My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.***

**10 “What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked.  
“Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’ 11 My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.**

Paul shares his conversion experience on the road to Damascus with them. In the Book of Acts and Paul’s letters, he shares it four times. The reasons for sharing it included:

Acts 22:3-8	To persuade the Jews
Acts 26:1-5	To persuade the Gentiles (Romans)
Philippians 3	For theological understanding
1 Timothy 1:12-14	To give encouragement

“Paul was a determined persecutor of Christians and Jesus until this heavenly light shone on him. It is as if Paul said: “I was just like you all, until I had an encounter with Jesus. Jesus met me and my life was dramatically changed.” (Guzik)

Paul is going into great detail about his conversion experience. This account is almost as detailed as the one that Luke originally gave us in Acts 9.

**22:12 “A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. 13 He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him.**

**14 “Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. 15 You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’**

As I read these verses, two thoughts crossed my mind. One, can you imagine the response of the non-believing crowd. Second, what an amazing God we have. He took one of the greatest persecutors of Christians and made him one of the greatest Christians. He tells them that it was Ananias, a devout man according to the Law, a good Jew that welcomed him into the family of Christ.

“Paul wanted them to know that he still served the God of his fathers. He had not rejected Judaism. Instead, many in Judaism had rejected God as revealed in Jesus Christ.” (Guzik)

Remember Paul is willing to die for his faith in Jesus. Philippians 1:20-21 tells us, “*20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*” Paul does NOT fear death so he can speak boldly.

“Death is gain because death means more of Christ, and He’s better than anything this life can give us.” (John Piper)

“Acts 22:14 is a wonderful capsule of the duty of every one before God: *To know His will, to see the Just One (Jesus), and to hear the voice of His mouth (His word).*” (Guzik)

*22:17 “When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance 18 and saw the Lord speaking to me. ‘Quick!’ he said. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.’*

Paul tells them of a vision of Jesus that he had in the Temple more than 20 years ago when he was a young Christian. He doesn't mention this vision in any of his letters or epistles. He points out that even from his conversion to Christianity that he was still worshiping in the Temple. He wants them to know that he is not against Judaism.

*22:19 “‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you.20 And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’ 21 “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’ ”*

Paul recounts how he justified to Jesus staying in Jerusalem. How he thought that his deeds as a Jew were enough to still give him a free pass. It is almost like he is trying to use this historical argument again in this defense. He ends with his commission to take the Gospel to the Gentiles given by Jesus.

#### *Paul the Roman Citizen*

*22:22 The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, “Rid the earth of him! He’s not fit to live!”*

*23 As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, 24 the commander ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and interrogated in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this. 25 As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, “Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been found guilty?”*

This answers my thought in question 10. The response of the Jews throughout Paul's defense was not what I had thought. They had been listening until he said that he had received a commission to go to the Gentiles. Regardless of how the Jews had behaved toward God, they had a sense of entitlement. After all, "They were God's people." Now in these verses, this is the response that I expected. Now they wanted him dead. Since the crowd was getting out of control, the Roman commander ordered that Paul be scourged. Does this sound familiar? Just like Pontius Pilate dealing with Jesus in John 18:38-19:1. But now Paul plays the Roman citizenship card.

*22:26 When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. “What are you going to do?” he asked. “This man is a Roman citizen.”*

*27 The commander went to Paul and asked, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?”*

*“Yes, I am,” he answered.*

*28 Then the commander said, “I had to pay a lot of money for my citizenship.”*

*“But I was born a citizen,” Paul replied.*

*29 Those who were about to interrogate him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.*

The centurion went to the commander and the commander came to hear it for himself. Remember in Acts 16, when Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned without speaking up. God wanted to reach the jailer and his family.

“According to Stott, Roman citizenship could not be bought for a fee, only for a bribe. Normally, only right or reward only granted it. “The point was not that the tribune doubted Paul’s claim, but rather he was implying that anybody could become a citizen these days!” (Marshall)

No proof has been found of how Paul became a Roman citizen but his father or grandfather must have been awarded citizenship. The commander was concerned about binding Paul because it was unlawful to bind a Roman citizen, so he had already made a mistake.

### ***Paul Before the Sanhedrin***

***22:30 The commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews. So the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the members of the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.***

Before he found out that Paul was a Roman citizen, the commander was okay with doing what he wanted without understanding why. The commander takes Paul before the Sanhedrin so that he can get the charges against Paul correct. He doesn’t want to make any more mistakes. In the next chapters, Paul will have several opportunities to speak before this organization (Sanhedrin) that he was once a member. According to Acts 26:10, Paul will also get the chance to vote.

“God had revealed a plan to Paul right at his conversion. Paul was “*a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake*” (Acts 9:15-16). Paul knew the general plan; but just like us, he didn’t know how it would all work out. He had to trust God, just like every believer.” (Guzik)