

Paul's Address to the Jerusalem Crowd

Acts 22

Group ¹	C	V	Description
Paul's Defense before the Jews	22	1-21	Paul's address to the crowd in Jerusalem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> v1-2 - Paul gets the attention of the crowd and begins speaking in Hebrew v3-5 - Paul's Jewish heritage and early persecution of Christians v6-11 - Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus v12-16 - Ananias' healing and Paul's baptism and his future prophesied v17-21 - Paul's vision of the Lord's call for him to go to the Gentiles
		22-29	The crowd reacts and Paul is brought into the barracks and about to be scourged when his citizenship is revealed
		30	Paul is brought before the Council for questioning

Acts 21 ends with Paul's request to address the Jerusalem crowd being granted. The present chapter contains the address and the responses of the crowd and the Roman soldiers.

The crowd listened to Paul's speech in which he related his education and experiences as a Jew, his active persecution of "the Way", and his conversion after Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. He also related how he returned to Jerusalem but was also told to leave Jerusalem because the Jews wouldn't accept his testimony about Jesus and his conversion because of his active participation in persecuting the disciples. He is also told to go to "far away" Gentiles by Jesus. It is at this point that the crowd again reacts, saying that he shouldn't be allowed to live.

Paul is brought in and stretched out and about to be beaten when he inquires of those who would inflict the punishment whether or not it was lawful to scourge a Roman citizen. This causes an uproar among the guards and the centurion asks Paul how he obtained his citizenship, after he was informed of the situation. The centurion had purchased his citizenship, at great cost. Paul relates that he was born a Roman citizen. The following, from the ISBE², the IVP Bible Background Commentary, and our text, informs us that it was illegal to scourge a Roman Citizen.

ISBE—It was illegal to apply the *flagellum* to a Roman citizen ([Act 22:25](#)), since the Porcian and Sempronian laws, 248 and 123 BC, although these laws were not rarely broken in the provinces (Tac. *Hist.* iv. 27; Cic. *Verr.* v. 6, 62; Josephus, *BJ*, II, xiv, 9).

IVPBBC—But the Porcian and Julian laws exempted Roman citizens from such beatings without trial. Paul's citizenship excluded him from being tortured for information, and together with his being untried, it excluded him from punishment.

Acts 22:25-29 NASB But when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?" [26](#) When the centurion heard *this*, he went to the commander and told him, saying, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman." [27](#) The commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" And he said, "Yes." [28](#) The commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And

¹ (NASB) "Group" column from the headings in the NASB text.

² (Orr "Scourge; Scourging"; Walton et al. Acts 22:24-25)

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Paul said, "But I was actually born *a citizen*." ²⁹ Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains.

Roman citizenship could be attained a number of ways. The IVP Bible Background Commentary³ comments on verse 28 lists the possible ways.

Scholars note that one could achieve Roman citizenship in several ways: one could be (1) born to a Roman father (so Paul); (2) a citizen of a Roman colony; (3) a retired auxiliary soldier; (4) part of a municipal aristocracy or other group honored by Rome; or (5)—and this was most common after being born in Rome or in a colony—a slave freed by his or her owner.

It also notes, as identified through the exchange between the centurion and Paul, that there was a difference in rank between those who were freeborn citizens and freedpersons who purchased or were given their citizenship through the support of a patron. Thus those who were about to scourge him quickly let go of him, like one quickly lets go of something that is extremely hot to the touch.

Paul is held over until the next day when he is released and the centurion ordered the Council to be assembled and to bring their accusations against Paul in their presence.

The Summarized Bible⁴ notes that verse 16 is a strong verse in this chapter. While Paul is speaking of his own experience, this part of Paul's testimony was something that the Jerusalem crowd needed to hear, but probably wouldn't understand nor respond to in a positive way.

Acts 22:16 NASB 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

Paul is an example of the steadfast faith and dedication that all Christians should cultivate in their lives, especially when faced with opposition. Just as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, Ephesians and Thessalonians, we are to stand firm, holding fast to God's word.

1 Corinthians 16:13 NASB Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

Ephesians 6:11-17 NASB Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, ¹⁵ and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. ¹⁷ And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1 Thessalonians 3:7-8 NASB for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; ⁸ for now we *really* live, if you stand firm in the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 NASB So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions

³ (Walton et al. Acts 22:28)

⁴ (Brooks Acts 22)

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which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.

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