

Within the Word
Acts 22 NIV study guide

Acts 21:37-40

As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, "May I say something to you?" "Do you speak Greek?" he replied. **38** "Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert some time ago?" **39** Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people." **40** Having received the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic:

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1 "Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense." **2** When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said:

3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and 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 also the high priest and all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished. **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. **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 fathers 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 men 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.' **17** "When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance **18** and saw the Lord speaking. 'Quick!' he said to me. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' **19** "'Lord,' I replied, 'these men 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.'"

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 Paul to be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and questioned 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?" **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 big price for my citizenship." "But I was born a citizen," Paul replied. **29** Those who were about to question him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains. **30** The next day, since the commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.

Read the chapter over at least twice before beginning to answer the questions. Pray and ask God to open your heart and mind to the truth in this chapter.

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1. Where is Paul at this time?

What city is he in?

2. Had he been warned that something like this would happen?

This crowd is so out of control that the soldiers had to pick Paul up and carry him into the prison. Try to picture this scene, people reaching through, past the soldiers, to grab Paul's clothes.

3. What unusual thing does Paul request being a prisoner?
4. What was it about his request that surprised the commander?
5. Who did the commander think Paul was?

This is one of the most important speeches that Paul gives in his life. This is the testimony of the Apostle Paul, what subjects did he cover.

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We never know when we might be called on to give a testimony so it might be a good idea to spend a bit of time putting it down on paper.

*Paul spoke to them in Aramaic, the common language spoken by ordinary Jews in Jerusalem. Think about this for a few minutes,

a. why would this be an important step?

b. Whose hearts might be willing to listen and believe; whose would be less likely?

6. Notice how he begins his address to the crowd. What does he call them?
7. He begins by relating his place of birth and his heritage. How would this address the accusations? Remember what is it that they have against him? Acts 21:28

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8. What have we already seen about this man Gamaliel?

Go back and read Acts 5:33-39. Write down a few things you see about this man and why mentioning him could prove beneficial.

9. Who does Paul compare himself to in the last half of verse 3, in what way are they alike?

10. What was his evidence of how much he loved God and His law? Vs. 4-5

11. Now Paul shares his Damascus Road experience with them. Why would he go into so much detail here?

Do you think this testimony resounded in their heads and hearts long after this day?

Do you remember the personal stories others tell of their life experiences?

12. What happened to dramatically change the focus of the crowd that day? Paul had been enjoying their undivided attention until vs.22. What happened?

13. The commander ordered him brought inside to be examined and questioned. What is the manner of examination about to be carried out in vs. 24?

Have you ever heard anyone teach on a Roman flogging? Prisoners often died after this type of torture.

14. What question did Paul pose to the centurion that stopped them from carrying out their orders?

15. What were some of the benefits afforded someone who was a Roman citizen?

16. What similar law do we enjoy as American citizens?

17. It is difficult for us to imagine all the things that Paul went through as a follower of Christ. We enjoy so much religious liberty even in the society we live in today. One day it may not be this way for our children or grandchildren. What can you do today to try to hold on to some of the religious freedom and build up the moral fiber of our nation?

18. Spend some time today pondering all we have seen in this chapter. How can you apply it to your daily life?

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19. Are there any principles you might share with someone else that would be beneficial as they walk through difficult situations? I am not simply referring to telling them they can make it through it? What biblical principles have we seen today?

20. What will God do for us when we are in a difficult situation?

21. What do you know of the character of God that would comfort you as you too endure difficulties for the sake of the gospel?