

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 6TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

RELIGIOSITY (ACTS 21:40–22:5)

A HUSH FELL OVER THE CROWD

As Paul began his first of five defenses in Acts, he gestured to the crowd and they became silent. The man they had just called a heretic and attempted to kill was now planning to speak to them. He then addressed them in their own language, and they grew even quieter.

PAUL'S RESUMÉ

Paul was now appealing to these people, letting them know all of his credentials and how he stacked up to each of the people in the crowd. He was a Jew, just like they were—born in Tarsus, but raised in Jerusalem, and brought up under the teachings of Gamaliel.

GAMALIEL

Paul name dropped Gamaliel here because most in that crowd would have recognized that name. He was one of the foremost Jewish leaders, and this would have legitimized Paul.

- Someone's credentials don't always mean that what they say is valuable and true. **We must always compare it to the truth: Scripture.**

ZEALOUS

Paul let them know that he was even more zealous for the OT law than they were while trying to kill him. He killed Christians and jailed men and women.

- Most of the time, our religious zeal is just an attempt to cover up our own sins, and it will often cause more damage than good.**

RELIGION

At this point, Paul had already proven he was the most religious person present that day, but he didn't end there. Paul would go on to remind them that it wasn't his religion that saved him; **it was his faith in Christ.**

- Are we so caught up in our religion that we are forgetting about our relationship?**

TESTIMONY (ACTS 22:6–11)

BLINDING LIGHT

As Paul was walking to Damascus, a light, brighter than the midday sun, blinded him. He fell to the ground and heard **Jesus of Nazareth** speaking.

- Paul wanted everyone to know it was the same Jesus that was crucified 27 years earlier who spoke to him that day.

"THE ONE YOU ARE PERSECUTING"

After Jesus identified Himself to Paul, He reminded Paul that the attacks weren't only against Christians but against Him. If we are persecuted, He is persecuted with us.

- When we live a life for God, He is glorified, but when we live for ourselves, we disgrace His name.**

"WHAT SHOULD I DO, LORD?"

Paul immediately looked for direction when he recognized it was Jesus speaking to him. In blindness, he stepped forward in obedience, led by the hand of his companion.

- Are we asking God for direction?** And when He answers, do we respond like Paul with **immediate obedience?**

COMMISSION (ACTS 22:12–16)

RESTORATION

Paul made it to Damascus and was led to Ananias. Paul once again appealed to the Jewishness of the crowd by pointing out Ananias's good standing with the law and the other Jews in Damascus. Ananias, through the Holy Spirit's power, restored Paul's sight.

"THE GOD OF OUR ANCESTORS..."

Paul didn't deserve this grace. He didn't deserve to proclaim the works of Christ to the nations. He was appointed to this role through the **grace of God.**

- None of us deserve to be saved from our own sins, but that's the beauty of God's grace.**

"GET UP AND BE BAPTIZED..."

Paul's life was changed on the road when he encountered Jesus, but he was now told to make an outward expression of that change through baptism and calling on the name of Jesus as his Savior.

- Baptism is our first step of obedience to Christ.** If we are holding off, we must ask ourselves, **"Why not now?"**

WITNESS (ACTS 22:17–21)

PAUL'S PRAYER

At the end of his defense, Paul mentioned that he was praying at the temple when he received a vision from God. This went back to the mob's original charge against him: defiling the temple. Why would he defile it? He prayed and worshiped there.

FROM SAUL TO PAUL

Even though Paul's miraculous transformation from a Pharisee who persecuted Christians to a bold Christian should have made his words more persuasive to the people of Jerusalem, it instead led them to view him as a traitor, and they had no desire to listen.

OUR WILL VS. GOD'S WILL

In Chapter 9, Paul spoke "boldly" in Jerusalem with the disciples. He had a desire to share with his fellow Jews, but they tried to kill him, just like this current mob. Once again, Paul was obedient to Christ and, **against his own desires, followed Christ's desires instead.**

- Our good desires can still lead to disobedience if they go against God's.**

CITIZEN (ACTS 22:22–29)

FROM AUDIENCE TO MOB

When Paul implied that Jews and Gentiles would be on equal ground with God, the silent audience once again became a mob dead set on the extermination of Paul.

- Their hatred for the Gentiles blinded them to the gift that Paul was trying to show them.

INTERROGATION

Paul was taken away from this incoherent mob so the Roman guards could interrogate him through torture. Paul had been beaten many times before, but the "scourge" was especially bad. It was made of leather strips, weighted with rough pieces of metal or bone, and attached to a sturdy wooden handle.

PAUL THE CITIZEN

Fortunately for Paul, this form of punishment was not allowed against Roman citizens. Probably due to his current state, the commander didn't seem to believe Paul could be a citizen. It most likely stunned everyone when Paul said he was born into it.

RELATIONSHIP OR RELIGION?

- When we allow people to speak into our lives, are we blindly applying it or putting it up against God's Word?
- Are we so focused on religious practice that we have neglected our relationship with Christ?**

PREPARED

- As Christians, we should always be prepared to give a defense for our faith in Christ to those who may doubt or even persecute us.**
- This doesn't mean we must know every answer to every question, but we must be able to explain why we believe.**

OUR LIVES

- Are we living our lives in a way that brings glory to God's name through our words and our actions?**
- God is faithful to show us the path He has set out before us when we ask.
- How are we responding when He answers?**

GRACE

- We deserve nothing that we have in this life. It has all been given by God.
- Through God's grace, we have been saved from ourselves. So how are we thanking God for such grace?**
- Have we taken advantage of His grace?**