

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 6TH, 2026 // THE BOOK OF ACTS

DEFENSE (ACTS 21:40–22:5)

PERMISSION

Paul at this point has been beaten by this crowd that is fueled by lies and gossip. **Claudius is also confused and just wants to find out what is going on and who Paul is** before a riot gets him killed by his superiors. So, Claudius gives Paul permission to talk to the crowd. We don't know why he gave permission, but he did.

- In a time and world of chaos, **we always need to be people who seek truth.**

ARAMAIC

This would have been the common tongue in Jerusalem. Hebrew was used more for religious ceremonies and temple services, and Greek was the most common language in the known world. We are going to see the majority of the crowd's response, but **we won't see everyone's response to Paul's testimony.** What happens is they see Paul is a Jew, and not this Egyptian terrorist, **so they listen.**

- We need to be **ready, in season and out of season, to share the gospel.**

TARSUS

Paul grew up in a city that wasn't just rich economically but also philosophically. Tarsus rivaled Alexandria and Athens when it came to philosophical ideas and thought. It was home to one of the most prominent universities for Stoicism, and it was famous for tents made from goat hair. So Paul would have grown up around **ideological combat, tentmaking, and pagan thoughts** until he was sent to Jerusalem. **God perfectly crafted Paul's life for His missionary work.**

EDUCATED

Paul would have left when he was around 13 years old and started studying under Gamaliel in Jerusalem, which speaks to the level of intelligence that Paul had. **Gamaliel was the wise elder in Acts 5:34–39** who defended the apostles before the Sanhedrin.

- We can be guided by some of the wisest and greatest faith warriors, but **faith is not transferable** between people.

PERSECUTED

Acts 9 is Paul's conversion story from Luke's point of view, while this testimony and the next in Acts 26 are from Paul's perspective. He was a zealous man. He did not discriminate when it came to harming Christians. Prison then was different than prison now; **people needed support to survive it.** Paul knew people would die in prison, and he felt "called" to do this. **But then God showed up.**

- How many of us would have stopped at what **we saw Paul as, and not what Paul could be?**

TESTIFY

Paul did not just let the people trust his testimony. He essentially said, "Go ask the elders and the ones who sent me, they'll tell you." He not only wasn't afraid to tell others of the sins he had committed, but **he was willing to let others talk about them as well.**

- The grace of God does something in us **that disarms all weapons formed against us.** It turns our deepest shame into mercy and death into testimony.

AND GO (ACTS 22:6–21)

THE ONE

Jesus is shown in a bright light at the brightest part of the day, and He asks Paul a question: "Why are you persecuting me?" **What happens is Jesus identifies with His people.** He does not only desire to know us—He wants to be so close to us that when someone hurts us, they hurt Him.

- We need to be careful in **how we treat others** and **know who people are in the eyes of the Lord.**

I DO?

Paul has a reasonable response to seeing Jesus post-ascension. He asks what he should do, and the Lord's response is to find another Christian. Ananias, a well respected follower of the law, was one of the Christians Paul was on the way to persecute and even kill, **yet God calls for Paul to be ministered to and baptized by his enemies.**

- Do we see this church as a place for our friends or for anyone who desires to know the Lord? **How uncomfortable are we willing to be?**

THEY KNOW

After Paul had been baptized and forgiven of his sins, he had this continued zeal to share the gospel with people he knew, but God had other plans. He called Paul to go far away to protect him, have him plant churches, and let the **other apostles see that Paul's conversion was authentic.**

- Just because we have passion about something, that doesn't mean it's a calling. **Passion can be redirected, and a calling can be divinely supported.**

RETURNED

Verses 17–21 give us insight into something we didn't see earlier. Paul continues to show he is not abandoning the Jewish traditions by telling about the time he was praying in the temple and fell into a trance. We see Paul's method of mission was divinely appointed, not through experience but by Word. **Paul was meant to be the apostle to the Gentiles**, but tragically, the crowd couldn't comprehend this.

- The office of apostle is closed, **but we all have an audience we can speak into.**

CITIZEN (ACTS 22:22–29)

RAISED

The crowd was quietly listening until Paul reached the idea that Gentiles may be able to come to God without the law. They didn't have a problem with Gentiles following Jewish law and converting to Judaism. The issue they had was **finding out that someone could come to God without the work they had painstakingly done.**

- This isn't a new issue. The parable of the prodigal son is about Jewish people having an issue with **people coming to God through grace**, not work.

FLINGING

No one knows the intention behind the crowd throwing the dust in the air or flinging their garments around. When hysteria and sin take over, **people start to lose the image-bearing identity we are all born with.**

- **If we ever want to know how we will treat Jesus**, we look at how we treat strangers, our friends, and even our enemies.

SCOURGE

This is different from the other beatings Paul had gone through and the regular beatings given by Roman and Jewish leaders. They were usually done with a rod, but this was done with a whip with pieces of metal or bone attached. If someone survived it, they would be permanently disabled. **It was an effective way to make people talk**, so this is most likely what caused Paul to bring up his citizenship.

- When we approach hardship, **do we try to learn what the Lord is teaching us?**

BOUGHT

Rarely did someone fake their citizenship because the punishment for that would be far worse than any punishment they were about to receive. **With citizenship came special privileges**—one of them was that they couldn't be bound and tortured without proper court approval. People became citizens by being greatly beneficial to Rome, paying for it, or inheriting it from their fathers.

- If we are in this room, we have been given a lot, **so what do we see is required of us?**

BOUND

This is the end of Paul's "freedom." The next six chapters span four years, and Paul will sit before rulers and people of authority, **sharing the gospel as he goes, praying for those who are lost, and shepherding God's churches while under guard or in prison.** Paul is extremely well-educated, grew up around religious leaders, and faithfully followed the law. The amount of capability in this man was incredible, and now, he's in bondage, **at the mercy of a soldier and in the hands of the Father.**

POTENTIAL

- Paul had the potential to become a high priest. Looking back on our lives, many of us see the mistakes, victories, and missed opportunities **that had so much potential in our lives.**
- But God saw the route we were going to take, and **He knew where it would lead us.**
- He sees what we've lost and what we've gained. **He also sees what will happen to us.**
- We worship a God who made it where when He lost a son, it **became a gain to us.**

LOST

- We have all experienced loss at some point.
- Some of us are so familiar with it **we've gotten used to it.** Some of us are not used to it, and **we try to avoid it every chance we get.**
- It's not just people we can lose. **It's time, money, and even relationships**—things we value and care about but which can easily turn into idols.
- But when we see what Christ has done for us, **how can we hold anything back from the Lord?**

GAIN

- When we are completely obedient to the Lord, **we will gain more than we can imagine.**
- Our "losses" become gains **because Christ changes who we are completely.**
- When we receive grace, we gain access to a well so deep that **our sins aren't the source of our shame but are our testimony of God's grace.** We become a community by serving. By getting in a Life Group, we gain a family. If we tithe, our trust in the Lord deepens so much more.