

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 22

A quick reminder where we are at –

In our study last week – we saw Paul arrive in Jerusalem, where he was informed by the leadership of the church that many believing Jews (Christians) had been stirred by the rumors that Paul was going around telling the Jews that they didn't have to adhere to Mosaic Law and Jewish traditions.

At the urging of the leadership of the church, Paul went to the temple (to demonstrate his Jewishness) – and while he was at the temple, he was accused by non-believing Jews from Ephesus of bringing a gentile into the Temple.

And then chaos erupted –

The Jews laid hands on Paul – in a bad way.

They tried to kill him and by God's providence, Roman soldiers showed up and broke the riot – they arrested Paul (by mistaken identity)

And as they made their way to the top of the fortress, Paul asked the commander for an opportunity to speak to the mob –

And this evening we find out exactly what he said -

Let's pray...

I have said it many times; the most powerful witness that you and I can give to someone is our testimony.

No one can argue against the work that Jesus has done and is currently doing in our lives.

This was my life before Jesus – this is my life now –

What Paul is going to do here on the steps of the Antonia Fortress – as he is looking down on the mob that down below at the Temple Mount – he is going to provide for them, his testimony.

He seized the opportunity to give his testimony in the hope that the Jews, his brethren, would see the power of the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, to transform lives.

Paul was probably thinking to himself -

**[Act 22:1-30 NKJV] 1 "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now."**

Paul has been beaten

Paul had been slandered.

Yet we see here in verse 1 that he has the presence of mind to use terms of respect.

He could have called out to them and said, "You bunch of bums"

But he addresses them as brothers and fathers

I had you make a note of the words “my defense” – because the word that is used here is the word where we get our word – apologetics

And it is the same word that Peter in his epistle -

**[1Pe 3:15 NKJV] 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always [be] ready to [give] a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;**

Paul is going to defend his faith – to those that disagree

And just like we find in Peter’s epistle, he is doing with meekness and kindness.

He is not angry at them or being rude or disrespectful.

**2 And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said:**

Again, last week I made the point that when it states Hebrew language – it refers to Paul speaking to them in Aramaic.

Now, Greek was the common language that most of the world spoke and understood during this time.

Why did Paul address them in Aramaic?

## Two reasons

1. Paul identified with his listeners and with their religion. We sometimes say of a person, "He's speaking my language." We use it not so much of a real language but to describe the fact that the person seems to understand us and is making a connection with us.

When we share our testimony to a non-believer, we need to make sure that we don't use words that nonbelievers cannot possibly understand. Words like justification, sanctification, and substitutionary atonement. They are not going to connect.

2. Second reason is that he is excluding the Roman soldiers from understanding the message that he has for the Jews.

**3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. 4 "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, 5 "as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.**

Here we have Paul identifying with the Jews –

He is building a bridge toward his audience.

He says, “I am indeed a Jew”

Notice that he did not say, I was a Jew but now I am a Christian

As far as Paul is concerned, he is still a Jew

He had not turned his back on the Jews like rumors said he had.

He may not have been born in Jerusalem – making him a Greek Jew or a Hellenist Jew – but he goes on to say that he was raised in Jerusalem and studied under the feet of the great rabbi – Gamaliel.

And he makes it very clear that he was a zealot for the law.

Think about what Paul is saying here

- I’m a Jew
- Raised in Jerusalem
- Studied under Gamaliel
- A zealot for the law

Not only is Paul a Jew – he is saying that he is a Super Jew

He has all the credentials of good Jew

And then he goes on to list how zealous he was.

“I persecuted the Christians – not a little bit”

I persecuted them to the death – that is how much of a zealot I was.

Not only did I persecute those in Jerusalem – I went after “the way” or after Christians in other places.

Reminder – he is saying this to a crowd that had just unsuccessfully tried to kill him.

“Hey guys, I am not mad at you for laying hands on me and trying to kill me!!!”

“And the reason I am not mad is because I was once like you”

I thought like you, I acted like you

Now, keep in mind that at this point – Paul has been a follower of Christ for around 20 years.

Yet he still could relate to the way non-believers thought.

Church, I think there are times, when we forget what it was like to be in the world.

We need to show sympathy toward those that are lost

We need to remember what it was like to live with the guilt and the shame and the difficulty before the light of the gospel shined on us.

Paul had that sympathy toward the Jews and God wants us to have that sympathy toward those who do not know Him.

Paul now transitions from telling them how much he is like them to how he came to find Jesus.

6 "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. 7 "And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' 8 "So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' 9 "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. 10 "So I said, **'What shall I do, Lord?'** And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.'

Paul was a zealot for the law – persecuting Christians until a great light from heaven shone around him.

Here, Luke records Paul's conversion

This is something he does three different times in the book of Acts –

In chapter 9

Here, he recounts it for a Hebrew audience

And later on in chapter 26, he will recount it for a Gentile audience.

Each time, it is slightly different, though never contradictory – depending on his listeners.

I had you make a note where Paul says, 'What shall I do, Lord?

The bible tells us that no man can call Jesus Christ “Lord” except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3)

The fact that Paul acknowledge Jesus as Lord shows that he had a genuine conversion experience right there on the road to Damascus -

**11 "And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus. 12 "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt [there], 13 "came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him.**

Notice how Paul refers to Ananias –

He refers to him, not as a believer but as a good Jew – a devout man according to the law.

Again, he has been wrongfully accused of being anti-Jew.

Paul wanted to make sure that what he said was not contrary to their beliefs.



He wasn't sugar-coating anything, he was just using terms that were meaningful to his listeners.

What he is saying is that he was a good Jew then, he is a good Jew now and another good Jew, Ananias, welcomed him into the kingdom of God.

**14 "Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will (1), and see the Just One (2), and hear the voice of His mouth (3).**

Here in verse 14 –

We have a great capsulization of what God desires for the life of the believer.

1. Know His will – what does God want for your life –

Turn to John 6

**[Jhn 6:28-29 NKJV] 28 Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."**

If you want to know what God wants for you, it all starts here.

2. See the Just One – this refers to the ultimate Righteous One – the ultimate One who has never sinned. Jesus. And God's desire is that we see Him, He desires that we behold Him and the way we do this is by reading about Him in His Word.
3. Hear the voice of His mouth – do we seek Him daily, do we read our bible daily – because that is how He speaks to us.

**15 'For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.**

This is exactly what Paul is doing at this very moment.

He is sharing with these Jews his personal experience of salvation.

He is witnessing to them what he has seen and heard.

**16 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'**

Ananias is telling Paul – you have your orders. What are you waiting for?

Get up and go!

I had you make a note of wash away your sins – because some groups have taken this verse out of context to mean that baptism is a requirement for salvation because baptism washes away our sins.

Turn with me to 1 Peter 3

**[1Pe 3:21 NKJV] 21 There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,**

It's the heart calling out to God that brings a cleansing from God.

Water baptism doesn't wash away our sins – it is a picture of what already has happened when we come to Christ.

Now, Paul is going to fast forward a little bit – 3 years after his conversion.

**17 "Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance 18 "and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.'**

So three years after his conversion, Paul returns to Jerusalem – and I had you make a note that he was praying in the temple.

Now -

Is this a man that was anti-Jewish

Is this a man that was anti Temple?

No –

He wants the crowd to know that even though he put his faith in Jesus Christ – he was not against Jewish ceremonies.

And it was while Paul was praying in the temple that he has this vision where he sees Jesus Christ.

And Jesus tells Paul – to get out of Jerusalem quickly – for they are not going to listen to you.

**19 "So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. 20 'And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'**

Do you understand what Paul is doing here in verse 19,20

He is arguing with Jesus.

Jesus said – get out of there

And Paul is saying – Jesus, I am the perfect guy to share the gospel to the Jews.

I am one of them – they can relate to me.

Church, how often we, like Paul, argue with God when we are convinced we know better than He does.

I know God but....

I know what the scriptures say but....

Whenever we find ourselves arguing with the Lord, or with the scriptures, we can be sure of one thing – we are wrong.

**21 "Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the **Gentiles.**'**

**" 22 And they listened to him until this word, and [then] they raised their voices**

**and said, "Away with such a [fellow] from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" 23**

**Then, as they cried out and tore off [their] clothes and threw dust into the air,**

From the moment that Paul began to speak back to the Jews in verse 2, the crowd was listening attentively.

The moment that Paul mentions that he was sent to the Gentiles – the crowd loses it.

The Jews hated the Gentiles.

Any thought God might save them was sickening to them.

They went wild and acted-out their emotion by tearing their clothes and throwing dust into the air.

The mob fulfilled what Jesus had told Paul decades earlier – that Jerusalem would not receive his testimony.

**24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him.**

The Roman soldiers they take Paul into the fortress and they are about to scourge him

—

Remember, Paul spoke to the Jews in Aramaic – the soldiers had no idea of why the Jewish mob was acting crazy down in the temple mount.

They are going to scourge Paul in order to see if he will confess what he spoke to them.

**25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?"**

Paul had played the good citizenship card before – in Philippi after being unlawfully beaten and incarcerated.

Here he waited until he had been bound and they were just about to whip him.

And he pulls out the citizen card.

The waiting tells us he was being led by the Lord to appeal to his rights as a Roman citizen only when it could help further the ministry of the Gospel.

His citizenship was a tool he could use from time to time.

Paul wasn't interested in his rights; only in his responsibility as a servant of Jesus.

**26 When the centurion heard [that], he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman." 27 Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes." 28 The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I**

**was born [a citizen]." 29 Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.**

The commander knows he is in trouble.

And he wants to know how Paul obtained his citizenship – as he had purchased his,

**30 The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from [his] bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.**

The commander is still looking for answers to find out why the Jews reacted the way they did to Paul speech –

So he takes Paul before the Sanhedrin.

Think about how God is orchestrating the entire thing –

Paul's heart is for his fellow Jew

He just had his opportunity to preach the gospel before a crowd of Jews and it turned out horribly.

He didn't even get the opportunity to tell them about how the OT points to Jesus.

However, now, Paul is going to have a second chance to talk his people.

How will it turn out?

We will find out next week.

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.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I



accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

