

Paul had concluded his third missionary trip by arriving in Jerusalem with elders from the various regions where he had planted churches. They brought an offering to assist the church in Jerusalem. James asked Paul to show the Jews that he was not against the Laws of Moses or Jewish customs by making a vow with some of the brothers and bringing an offering to the temple. The vow included seven days of purification.

²⁷ When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, ²⁸ crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." Acts 21:27-28 Those who had followed Paul around from city to city to stir up the towns against him, partnering with idol worshipers in the process, have recognized him in the temple. Paul must have had distinctive features that made it easy to spot him.

There was some truth to their claim, at least from their perspective. In fact, most Jews, referred to here as "the people," did reject their Messiah (Acts 13:46ⁱ). Christ did fulfill the Law and it is no longer a yoke on the neck of followers of Christ (Acts 15:10ⁱⁱ). Instead, we can be led by the Spirit behind the Law, the Holy Spirit. The temple was no longer the way to approach God and it was about to be destroyed, as Jesus predicted (Matthew 24:2ⁱⁱⁱ). Jesus has replaced the temple (Matthew 12:6^{iv}) as the place to meet with God and invites us to be living stones that make up God's dwelling place (1 Peter 2:5^v). Jesus is our access to God's presence (Ephesians 2:18^{vi}).

²⁹ For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. Acts 21:29 Luke is gracious in saying "they supposed" instead of saying they lied. I find legalists who are jealous of power and authority are quick to make assumptions about those who are led of the Spirit. They put one and one together and are sure it equals six. They either lied or jumped to a conclusion without even looking to see if it was true.

³⁰ Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. Acts 21:30 Defiling the temple was a big deal to the Jews. They didn't realize they were the ones that were dishonoring the temple by rejecting the Messiah and persecuting the Messiah's servants. Surrounding the temple was a four-and-a-half-foot high wall. On it, there were inscriptions in three languages that read that if a Gentile passed the wall they were guilty of causing their own death. That's how serious they were about keeping Gentiles out of the temple. They dragged Paul out into the Court of the Gentiles.

³¹ And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. ³² He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Acts 21:31-32 Herod the Great had built an army barracks called the Fortress of Antonia

adjacent to the northwest corner wall of the temple grounds. The Romans could observe when things got out of hand. The tribune was Claudius Lysias (Acts 23:26^{vii}).

³³ Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another. And as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. Acts 21:33-34 It was chaotic and most people didn't know what it was really about. It was mob mentality. So the tribune tried to take Paul into the fortress for questioning.

³⁵ And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, ³⁶ for the mob of the people followed, crying out, "Away with him!" Acts 21:35-36 I can visualize the scene of Romans in formation around Paul with shields up and swords drawn, with several in the middle carrying Paul by the armpits, while the crowd surrounded the soldiers screaming at them. As soon as they would have arrived at the steps of the fortress the Jews would not follow for to do so would cause them to be defiled. That is where Paul was finally somewhat safe.

³⁷ As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek? ³⁸ Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" ³⁹ Paul replied, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people." Acts 21:37-39 Paul was a learned man from a city famous for its universities. He was trilingual. Lysias had made an assumption that Paul was an Egyptian who had led a band of men to the Mount of Olives, having convinced them that the walls would fall and they would take over Jerusalem. The Romans killed most of them, but the Egyptian leader escaped.

^{40a} And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people. Acts 21:40a Luke often uses language and descriptions that compare the Romans being more open and fair than Jews. There are some that think the whole book of Acts was written for Paul's defense at his trial in Rome. I don't think that is the case, but it does show that Gentile world was more open to hearing the Gospel and emphasizes Paul's call to proclaim it to them.

This is amazing. Paul has just been beaten and all he wants to do is share his testimony with those who beat him in hopes that they will come to know Jesus as their Savior. May God give us that kind of desire that even people who mistreat us may come to know Jesus as their Savior.

^{40b} And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying: ¹ "Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you." ² And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. Acts 21:40b-22:1-2 Paul had just been falsely accused and mercilessly beaten but his desire is to share the Gospel with those he generously addresses as "brothers and fathers." Hebrew is the language of the Scriptures and used by teachers of the Torah. Most Jews spoke Aramaic which was similar. Some from the

nations that had come for Pentecost could only speak Greek. What they were about to hear in their sacred language was Paul's testimony. I wonder if the leaders tried to suppress the news of Paul's conversion or distort the story of what had happened a couple of decades earlier. Paul is about to tell them his version of how he was converted. I can't help but think those leaders that knew the truth were cringing that the truth was about to be told.

And he said: ³ *"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.* Acts 22:3 Paul informed them that he was a disciple of Gamaliel, one of the most respected rabbi of that day. The accusation against Paul is that he is teaching people to ignore the laws of Moses. Paul started by telling them how zealous he was for God and how he strictly observed the law. He graciously attributes their attack on him as being that same zeal for the law.

⁴ *I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women,* ⁵ *as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.* Acts 22:4-5 Paul explained that he had been in their shoes. He wanted to see Christians punished for following what he once thought was a false Messiah. He got a dig in by saying that the high priest and elders knew all this. Perhaps he was hinting at the fact that they had hidden it from the public or distorted what had happened.

⁶ *"As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me.* Acts 22:6 The Great Light is a term for the Messiah from Isaiah, *Ha 'or Gadol* (Isaiah 9:2^{viii}). It happened at noon, so this light outshone the full sun. No wonder Paul was blinded. Light shining is considered by Jews to be an expression of the glory of God. Remember how the glory of God shone round the shepherds (Luke 2:9^x). This light also connects with Paul's ministry to the Gentiles, for Isaiah also declared that the Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6^x).

⁷ *And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'* Acts 22:7 Why does God call a name twice? God knows us by name. We see the double call of a name in multiple cases in Scripture (1 Samuel 3:10^{xi}; Exodus 3:4^{xii}; Genesis 22:11^{xiii}; Luke 10:41^{xiv}). The double call of a name was the turning point in the life of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and Paul. Could it be that He is speaking to the old nature and then to the new? Will you let God call your name twice?

⁸ *And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'* Acts 22:8 When people persecute followers of Jesus, they are persecuting Jesus' body. He personally feels it. **Do we realize how intimately the Lord Jesus has bound Himself to us?** He spoke of being in us (John 17:23^{xv})? Do we realize how He feels our pain? In all their affliction, He was afflicted (Isaiah 63:9^{xvi}). No wonder Jesus said if we have done it to the least of these my brothers you have done it

to me (Matthew 25:40^{xvii}). Imagine the shock to Paul when he realized he was persecuting his long-awaited Messiah!

⁹ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. Acts 22:9 Jews who hear the sound but do not understand the words describes much of Jewish history. They heard the warnings of the prophets but usually ignored them (Jeremiah 25:4^{xviii}). They heard the prophecies of the Messiah but did not understand they were fulfilled in Jesus. Sometimes we hear a sermon or read the Word but don't understand what the Spirit is saying to us. That is usually because we don't take time to listen with our heart. We read a Scripture passage that God ordained for us to hear at that time, but our busyness keeps us from understanding God's voice to our spirit. Quiet your mind. Be still and listen with your heart. Surrender first and then expect to hear (Matthew 11:15^{xix}).

¹⁰ And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.' Acts 22:10 He asked for God's will. Then he heard and obeyed. The Spirit of God can be very specific. Often it is more of a general instruction to correct our attitude. But when we hear specific direction, we should be sure to do just as directed.

¹¹ And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. Acts 22:11 Is this where we get the expression, "Blinded by the light"? His spiritual condition was manifest in the physical. He had been spiritually blind to the truth that Jesus is the Messiah.

¹² "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, ¹³ came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. Acts 22:12-13 Ananias kept the law even after his conversion. The Jews respected his way of life. This is another example that shows us the early Jewish believers continued to live in accordance with the Laws of Moses. Another account tells of something like scales falling from his eyes (Acts 9:18^{xx}). This was a miracle which manifested the spiritual reality of Paul now being able to see the truth, that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.

¹⁴ And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; Acts 22:14 God chose Saul. Saul did not choose Jesus. Jesus said to the disciples, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." John 15:16^{xxi} If you are worried about whether or not you are chosen, you are probably chosen. If you weren't, you wouldn't be worried about it.

Theologians go around and round about whether we are chosen by God and have no say in the matter or whether we must apply the grace given to us and accept the invitation. Certainly, we see invitations in Scripture (Matthew 11:28^{xxii}; Joshua 24:15^{xxiii}; Acts 3:19^{xxiv}). We know God is sovereign and we see in Scripture man has free will to decide (John 6:37^{xxv}). How they both work together is a mystery. We know God is good, loving, and just. We just need to trust Him.

The expression "Righteous One" is a term for the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 (Isaiah 53:11^{xxvi}). Paul keeps using terms for the Messiah that they are familiar with. The context of those original verses in which the terms are used point to Jesus' life and to Paul's mission. Paul saw the risen Messiah whom he declared to be Jesus of Nazareth.

15 for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. Acts 22:15 That is what an Apostle is, an official witness of the resurrected Jesus Christ (Acts 1:22^{xxvii}). Everyone includes both Jews and Gentiles, common folk and kings.

16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.' Acts 22:16 This is what Peter told the Jews at Pentecost under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Baptism symbolized a death and rebirth and commitment to something new. We leave our sins behind on the cross, paid for by Jesus' death. We rise to newness of life in Him. To call on His name is to cry out for the mercy and grace He alone can give.

*17 "When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance
18 and saw him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.'¹⁹ And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you.²⁰ And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.'* Acts 22:17-20 He reminded them that he watched their cloaks when Stephen was stoned. It was years after Paul's conversion that he went to Jerusalem. This is the only passage in which Paul tells us about this trance. Paul declares that he saw Jesus speak this to Him and warn him that his message would not be accepted. He again told the crowd that he understood where they were coming from. He had hated Christians and beat and imprisoned them. What a powerful testimony of complete conversion after an encounter with the risen Jesus!

21 And he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" Acts 22:21 While Isaiah said the Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6^{xxviii}), the Jews of that day were self-righteous about their exclusivity. Gentiles could convert and be circumcised, even go to synagogues and sit in back, but they were second class Jews. Paul's mention of being sent to the Gentiles rather than the Jews infuriated the audience. It is a parallel to what happened to Jesus when He preached in Nazareth (Luke 4:26-28^{xxix}). As soon as Jesus reminded His fellow townspeople that God sent prophets to Gentiles, they wanted to push him off a cliff.

Jesus still brings division today. Jesus said that is how it would be (Matthew 10:34-36^{xxx}). Families divide over Him. Our culture is divided over Him. In fact, the world is divided over Him. That is because He claims to be the exclusive Lord over all (Matthew 28:18^{xxxi}). He is or He isn't. We have the freedom not to bow to His love and mercy now, but one day, every knee will bow (Philippians 2:9-11^{xxxii}). We who have surrendered to His love find our fears of giving our life to Him were unfounded. Instead, we find joy and peace. Paul was locked in a battle of good and evil. It will look like evil

prevailed, but when we look back now, we can see God had a plan in it all and was working in the circumstances to draw people then and now to His love. He is drawing some of you this morning. You've heard about our need to wait on Him, to listen, to hear Him call your name twice. And there is a battle in the spiritual realm over your response. Will you hear but walk away and go about filling your time with busyness? Or will you ask God to speak to you and take time to listen with your heart?

Questions

- 1 Why was Paul in the temple?
- 2 Why did the Jews attack him?
- 3 How was he respectful of his attackers?
- 4 Why was his testimony important?
- 5 What Messianic titles were given?
- 6 What was he supposed to be a witness of?
- 7 Why share his past persecution of believers?
- 8 What unique part of the testimony does he share?
- 9 Why did that infuriate them?
- 10 What is the parallel with Jesus?

ⁱ **Acts 13:46 (ESV)**

⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

ⁱⁱ **Acts 15:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

ⁱⁱⁱ **Matthew 24:2 (ESV)**

² But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

^{iv} **Matthew 12:6 (ESV)**

⁶ I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.

^v **1 Peter 2:5 (ESV)**

⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

^{vi} **Ephesians 2:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

^{vii} **Acts 23:26 (ESV)**

²⁶ "Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings.

^{viii} **Isaiah 9:2 (ESV)**

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

^{ix} **Luke 2:9 (ESV)**

⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

^x **Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)**

⁶ he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

^{xi} **1 Samuel 3:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."

^{xii} **Exodus 3:4 (ESV)**

⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

^{xiii} **Genesis 22:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

^{xiv} **Luke 10:41-42 (ESV)**

⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

^{xv} **John 17:23 (ESV)**

²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

^{xvi} **Isaiah 63:9 (ESV)**

⁹ In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

^{xvii} **Matthew 25:40 (ESV)**

⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

^{xviii} **Jeremiah 25:4 (ESV)**

⁴ You have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear, although the LORD persistently sent to you all his servants the prophets,

^{xix} **Matthew 11:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

^{xx} **Acts 9:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;

^{xxi} **John 15:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

^{xxii} **Matthew 11:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

^{xxiii} **Joshua 24:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

^{xxiv} **Acts 3:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,

^{xxv} **John 6:37 (ESV)**

³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

^{xxvi} **Isaiah 53:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

^{xxvii} **Acts 1:22 (ESV)**

²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."

^{xxviii} **Isaiah 42:6 (ESV)**

⁶ "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations,

^{xxix} **Luke 4:26-28 (ESV)**

²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." ²⁸ When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.

^{xxx} **Matthew 10:34-36 (ESV)**

³⁴ "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a

daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.

^{xxx}**i** **Matthew 28:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

^{xxx}**ii** **Philippians 2:9-11 (ESV)**

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.