

Standing for Truth

Acts 22:1-30

"Brethren, and fathers, hear my defense before you now" - Acts 22:1 (see 1 Peter 3:15)

Sometimes the most powerful sermon isn't preached on a Sunday morning but throughout the week, in the moments of everyday living (see [Matthew 28:19](#) – "as you are going"). Paul, having just been rescued from a murderous mob, now stands bound in chains before the very people who wanted to kill him. Yet instead of defending his actions, he defends his faith. Instead of proclaiming his innocence, he proclaims his Lord and Savior.

I. The **Power** of Personal Experience (22:1-21)

Paul's address, "**Brethren and fathers,**" is the same as Stephen's opening in [Acts 7:2](#), and Stephen's experience helped prepare Paul for his own.

A. His Life Before Jesus (vv. 3-5)

- **His Jewish heritage:** "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia" (v.3). Paul strategically emphasizes in verse 3 that he was educated "in this city" (Jerusalem), making him a hometown boy, not an outsider attacking their faith.
- **His religious education:** "brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel" (v.3). The Greek word *akribeia* ("strictness" in verse 3) describes mathematical precision, indicating Paul's training under Gamaliel was exact according to Jewish standards.
- **Zealous persecution:** "I persecuted this Way to the death" (v.4). "this Way" was an early Christian descriptive term, but it can also connect [John 14:6](#), where Jesus said "I am the Way".

B. His Encounter With Jesus (vv. 6-16)

- **God's bright light** (v. 6): "about noon a great light from heaven shone around me". The timing "about noon" and [Acts 26:13](#) – "brighter than the sun" emphasize the supernatural nature of this light that outshone the sun at its brightest.
- **An audible Voice** (v. 7): "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Paul's use of his Hebrew name "Saul" connects him to his Jewish identity. He also strategically describes Ananias as "a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews" (v. 12), which might have some positive effect on the crowd.
- **Paul's response** (v. 10): "What shall I do, Lord?"

C. How Jesus Changed His Life (vv. 17-21)

- **While he was praying** (v. 17): “while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance”. The Greek word *ekstasis* (verse 17) doesn't mean “trance” but “ecstasy” - a supernatural state of divine communion. Paul's vision occurred in the temple itself, answering the wrongful charge that he defiled it.
- **His mission would be the Gentiles** (v. 21): “I will send you far from here to the Gentiles”. Paul argues that they will listen to him because he imprisoned and beat Christians. However, Jesus said “Depart”, in Greek, it means “Move it!”

II. The Price of Gospel Truth (22:22-24)

The crowd listened until Paul mentioned one word: “Gentiles” (v. 21). They even kept listening when he mentioned Jesus (v.8).

- They demanded his death: “Away with such a fellow from the earth!”
- They threw dust in the air and cast off their clothes in fury.
- The commander ordered Paul to be examined by scourging, which was beating with leather strips embedded with bone and metal - the most merciless punishment short of crucifixion.
- “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?” (v. 25) Roman law strictly forbade scourging citizens without trial - Cicero declared binding a Roman citizen a crime, beating one worse than murder.
- The commander was terrified when he discovered Paul's status.
- Paul was “freeborn” with higher status than the commander who had purchased his citizenship

III. The Providence of God's Plan (22:30)

The commander calls for the chief priests and the Sanhedrin to meet, giving Paul another opportunity to witness to the most influential religious leaders in Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin included both Pharisees and Sadducees, creating theological divisions that Paul would later take advantage of. God sovereignly orchestrated Paul's arrest to prevent his murder and position him to fulfill God's purpose for his life. The legal proceedings will eventually take him to Rome (as Jesus had promised in Acts 23:11).

Applications For Today:

1. **Think Through Your Testimony** - Every Christian should be ready to share their faith story at a moment's notice. Include 3 simple ideas in your testimony: your life before Jesus, how you encountered Jesus, and your new life with Jesus. Keep it simple, real, and stay focused on what Jesus has done for you. (See 1 Peter 3:15)
2. **The Gospel Offends People – Don't Take It Personally** (see 1 Corinthians 1:18)
3. **Trust God's Sovereignty in Trials** - What looked like the end of Paul's ministry was actually God positioning him for an even greater platform. God is still in control, and He can use even our problems for His glory. (see Romans 8:28)
4. **Stand Firm Without Compromise** - Paul could have avoided the riot by keeping quiet about God's call to minister to Gentiles. Instead, he stood firm. He said in Acts 20:24, “*But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*”