

# ACTSFACTS

C@G Supplementary Study Notes for ACTS

## Message #50

### “PAUL ADDRESSES THE CROWD”

(Acts 21:37 – 22:21)



#### The Continuing Story.....

Paul and his associates have arrived back in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, there are rumours going around that Paul has been telling Jews and Gentiles that they should turn away from the law, and from the Jewish customs/culture when they begin to follow Jesus. This is not true. But the accusations are serious.

What is even more serious is the accusation that Paul took a Gentile (Trophimus) into the inner courts of the temple (reserved only for Jews). The penalty for this is death.

An angry mob, soon to escalate to “the whole city” (21:30), grabbed Paul and tried to kill him. The Roman commander (Claudius Lysias) was quick to intervene and placed Paul under arrest (thus, saving his life).

Now, on the way to the prison in Fort Antonia, Paul asks if he can address the crowd. He is given permission to do so. Now we see the violent mob in Chapter 21 become Paul’s audience in Chapter 22. Unfortunately, as we shall see, Paul’s words fall on deaf ears and hardened hearts.

#### Acts 22:2 – 21

This passage is often called “Paul’s Defense”. But it is far more than Paul trying to defend himself against the wrong accusations. It is a declaration of all that God, in Christ, has done for him. In short, it is his testimony.

**Think about your own testimony (your story of how you became a Christian and what Christ means to you). Have you ever given your testimony publicly? What was that like?**

**Would you like to share your testimony now (if you are going through this in a group)?**

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A typical testimony includes three basic elements:

- what a person’s life was like before Christ
- what their encounter with Christ was like
- what their life is like since coming to Christ

If you have never written out your testimony, or given it publicly, this is a good thing to do and these three points are a good model to follow.

Paul, in this address, also follows this basic outline. We will look at this passage in these three sections:

1. Paul’s Credentials (his life before Christ)
2. Paul’s Conversion (his encounter with Christ)
3. Paul’s Commission (his life since coming to Christ)

#### **PAUL’S CREDENTIALS (22:1-5)**

Keep in mind that Paul was addressing a predominantly Jewish audience. Thus, as a skilful communicator, he made an effort to highlight the “Jewishness” of his background. This was an important point...he wanted to show the Jews that, not only was he like them...they, now, could be like him.

**If you were a Jewish member of the crowd, what might you be thinking at the end of 22:1-5?**

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In this part of his speech, Paul showed that his background as a Jew was second-to-none. He was “ultra-Jewish”....and “anti-Jesus”. Indeed, he was a leader of persecution against the followers of Jesus (The Way).

**What was your life like before becoming a Christian? Would you say you were anti-Christian like Paul?**

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**Why do you think there is so much anti-Christian sentiment in our society today?**

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### **PAUL'S CONVERSION (22:6-16)**

Having established his thoroughly Jewish background, Paul proceeds to describe his encounter on the road just out of Damascus (Acts 9:3-19). Again, in this section, Paul continues to highlight particularly Jewish aspects (including phrases like "God of our Fathers" and "the Righteous One") in order to connect with and communicate more effectively with his listeners.

**If you were a Jewish member of the crowd, what might you be thinking at the end of 22:6-16?**

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Paul describes what happened to him:

- He was blinded (6)
- He was confronted (7)
- He was chosen (14)
- He was called (15)
- He was baptised (16)

Paul's conversion was a radical turnaround. The phrase "Damascus Road experience" is often used in the English language to refer to something that is a complete and utter change in direction, or attitude.

**Do you have a dramatic conversion story? Do you need one? What facts are more important than *when* you were converted?**

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**Do you have a difficult past? How can you be free from it? Is anything too bad for God to forgive? Can a person really start again with a new beginning?**

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### **PAUL'S COMMISSION ((22:17-21**

Paul continues to describe what happened after his encounter with Jesus. In so doing, he is not just saying that he was saved, he is declaring that he was saved FOR A PURPOSE! And that purpose was to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

Up to this point, the Jewish mob, though they may be disturbed or annoyed, has not reacted aggressively against Paul. However, the last sentence of his speech (21) tips the scales and elicits violent aggression against him. In effect, this last statement announces that the grace and goodness of God has extended to the Gentiles.

**If you were a Jewish member of the crowd, what might you be thinking at the end of 22:17-21?**

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This statement of Paul was offensive to the Jewish audience.

**In what ways might the gospel message be offensive in our contemporary culture?**

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**How can you make sure you remain faithful and put God first as you interact with others?**

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**How can you be praying for those that you know who are hostile to the gospel of Jesus Christ!**