

Abide in Me

John 15:4
*Bible studies for disciples
who make disciples*



Volume 8 - Number 7

The Week of November 13, 2022

Telling the Truth
The Sermon We All Carry
Acts 22:3-21

This week we turn our attention to the Apostle Paul's defense to being beaten by a crowd at the Temple and then arrested by the Romans because of the uproar ensuing from the calamity near the Temple. Paul's defense to these events are captured in Acts 22 and it takes the form of a powerful sermon of his testimony. As we examine this message, keep in mind your own testimony; the story from your own life of God's power, grace, and the salvation that changed your life. That's the theme that runs through Paul's message and will hopefully embolden each of us to share our own message.

READ ACTS 22:3-21

As you read:

- Circle each time persecution or imprisonment is mentioned in this text. It's worth calling out what Paul (Saul) was commissioned to do while under the direction of the Jewish leaders in his past life before his conversion.
- Underline the commands of Christ placed on his life, whether spoken by Christ Himself or through Ananias. Notice the contrast of the commissioning once Jesus changes his life.

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. 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.

⁶ "As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly 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 And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' ⁹ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. 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.' 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.

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. 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; ¹⁵ for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

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.’²¹ And he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

“Context is King.” As you prepare to discuss this passage, take time to read together Acts 21:17-40. These verses will provide an essential context for your study of our passage today. As you read Acts 21:17-40, consider the following questions:

1. In verse 21, the Christians in Jerusalem who greeted Paul as he arrived were relaying to Paul what had been spoken about him within the Jewish community in Jerusalem. This created quite a controversy and led to Paul being beaten and later arrested. What is listed in this verse that would go against Jewish tradition and why was it seen as inflammatory by some?
2. How do Jesus’ words from Matthew 5:17-20 help us understand a Christian’s approach to Mosaic law?
3. Why did the crowd react so violently toward Paul? After being beaten and arrested, why was Paul so adamant about addressing the crowd that had just beaten him?
4. Given how rumor mills can quickly turn into violence or mob rule, how does this passage help us to see the dangers about making assumptions about people or accepting second-hand information about someone in a leadership position? What should a Christian’s response be to rumors or second-hand information?

Now that we have an understanding of the context for Paul’s address in Acts 22, let’s examine his message.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE TOGETHER

1. In verses 3-5, Paul outlines some of his credentials to the Jewish crowd he is addressing. Why is this important for him to do? What do we learn about Paul through his description of this earlier phase of his life? List some of the attributes/accomplishments that Paul outlines.
2. He mentions that he persecuted “this Way” to the death in many cases. The earliest church was oftentimes referred to as “the Way.” In the earliest generations of the church, why did devout Jews persecute Christians to the point of death? Since Jesus was of course a Jew and the earliest church was entirely comprised of Jews, why was there such violence against their own people?

3. Verses 6-11 describe Paul's conversion to Christianity as Acts 9 attests to. As Saul encounters Jesus and has his name changed to Paul, how did God choose to reveal Himself to Paul? Why was this particular way effective for Paul and why was Paul left blind from it?

4. In light of reading about Paul's conversion, take a moment to describe the circumstances around your own conversion to Christ. How did God break through into your life? Was it a moment in time or was it a longer process of God's revealing Himself to you? Did you hear or feel God specifically speaking into your life? If so, what did He say to you?

5. Paul describes the role that Ananias played in taking him in once he arrived in Damascus. What do you see as Ananias' role in verses 12-16? How did God use Ananias in Paul's life? In your own faith journey, who has God used in similar ways to be "Ananias" to you?

6. Verse 6 is when Paul is commissioned to be baptized. This is the calling of every Christ-follower. Have you been baptized? If so, describe your baptism experience. If not, why have you not been baptized yet? Would you like to speak with someone in the church about baptism?

7. In verses 17-21, we see Paul describe how God spoke to him once he returned to Jerusalem after becoming a Christian. There was clearly a new commissioning on his life as God called him to greater things than he could have imagined. Why did God tell Paul to leave?

8. Paul refers to the stoning of Stephen in verse 20. Read Acts 7:54-8:3 to understand the fullness of this moment.

9. Paul was then sent by God to be His witness to the Gentiles. That set Paul's life on a very different path than all of his previous years had prepared him for. We are all beneficiaries of Paul's ministry in the first century of the church's existence. When God called Paul to a new life's journey, Paul followed faithfully and his life was infused with a Holy Spirit guided purpose. In what ways has God redirected your life since becoming a Christian?

Pray: Lord, thank you for giving me a testimony of your love changing my life. As you have brought me from spiritual blindness to spiritual sight, make me a witness to share this testimony of your grace to all of those you put in my path. Strengthen me so I may boldly share how you have changed my life. Amen.

