

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

Read ch. 21:40-22:16

1. To what nationality of people is Paul now speaking? (vs. 21:40-22:1)

It is always important to notice who is being addressed. It will give you the context of the words. Paul is always prepared to share his story. No doubt he saw this as a great opportunity to speak to his own people once again about how Christ had changed his life.

2. What kind of man had Paul previously been? (vs. 3 & 4)

Paul identifies with his audience by showing them how much alike they are. He totally understands their thinking because he used to be the same way. It becomes evident in this chapter that the accusations they made against Paul weren't the only problem. Just as much of an issue is the great division between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews considered the Gentiles to be unclean, defiled, not worthy of any kindness. They wouldn't even enter into the home of a Gentile. If a Jew married a Gentile he was disowned by his family and considered dead.

Christ came to redeem sinners from every nationality. God's great plan was to bring all believers together and form the church. Gal. 3:28 says: "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Also notice Romans 10:12&13 which says: "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

The audience of Jews in this chapter listens to Paul until he mentions that God gave him a ministry to the Gentiles. (vs. 21) They would not accept this. It just couldn't be God's plan to allow the unclean Gentiles to have a part in the gospel. People love their prejudices, even believers. To learn to love and accept those who you've been trained to despise is a hurdle that can only be removed by the renewing brought by indwelling Holy Spirit. This crowd did not even want to consider that their thinking wasn't pleasing to God.

3. Briefly tell of Paul's salvation experience. (vs. 5-16)

God had confronted Paul in a most dramatic way. Compare the other accounts of this event in Acts 9:1-18 and Acts 26:9-18. Paul was a Jewish zealot who thought he was defending the faith by attacking Christians. Even though he had lived through the events of Jesus' life, His death and His resurrection, his heart had remained as hard as a stone. He did not recognize Christ as the Messiah. He considered people who did to be heretics and he was going to make it his personal mission to destroy this movement.

God had other plans for Paul. When He appeared to him on the road to Damascus, He identified with those whom Paul was persecuting. Paul immediately realized that he had been wrong. His first response was "what shall I do, Lord"? (vs. 10) From then on Paul devoted his life to total obedience to Christ. The persecutor became one of the persecuted.

4. *After spending three days as a blind man, God sent another Jewish believer to Paul. What message did Ananias give to Paul?*

Acts 9:22-25 tells us that Paul spent many days in Damascus where his preaching became more and more powerful and "baffled the Jews" by proving the Jesus was the Christ. When Paul learned that they were plotting to kill him, his friends helped him escape by hiding him in a basket and lowering him over the wall. From there he went to Jerusalem. You will recall from chapter 9 that he was not immediately accepted even by the believers. Barnabas helped him by giving him his endorsement.

Read v. 17-30

5. *Why did Paul feel like he could have an impact on the Jews in Jerusalem? (vs. 19 & 20)*

Paul felt that they would surely be influenced for Christ when they saw the change that had occurred in his life. He was back among people he had known before he was converted. He didn't realize how difficult it would be to speak to them because of the hardness of their hearts.

6. *Why did God want Paul to leave Jerusalem? (vs. 18 & 21)*

It is commendable that Paul accepted his ministry to the Gentiles without any argument. He loved the Jews and would have gladly had a ministry to them. All through his preaching career and his missionary journeys he tried to reach the Jews first with the gospel. But he also recognized and fully embraced God's direction to minister to the Gentiles. Paul no doubt realized how unpopular he would be with his fellow Jews if he turned to the Gentiles, but nothing ever diverted Paul from his obedience to the Lord's direction.

7. *When Paul mentioned that God sent him to the Gentiles, how did the crowd react? (vs. 21 & 22)*

This is representative of what has happened all throughout the book of Acts. The Jews became less and less willing to listen to the gospel. They could not accept or even tolerate the thought that they were to be united with the Gentiles.

8. *What saved Paul from a scourging in vs. 24-29?*

This scourging would have involved being whipped with leather strips that had pieces of metal tied to the ends. People sometimes died from these beatings. This is also what Jesus endured just before his crucifixion. (John 19:1) Paul's citizenship was often a benefit for him. The Romans took care of their own. As a citizen, he had many more rights that he did as a Jew. When the commander says in verse 28 that had to pay a big price for his citizenship, he may have meant that he had bribed someone to get it. Paul, however, was born a citizen.

9. *How did the chief captain go about getting to the bottom of the problem? (vs. 30)*
It is interesting that there is no mention of any other Christians standing with Paul. Had they all turned away from him? Did they do anything to help or encourage him? During the whole 2 years of imprisonment, they are never mentioned.