
RELATED SCRIPTURES

Acts 9:9-19 | Philippians 3:4-6 | Isaiah 42:1-4

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 10.8.23

SUMMARY

During his third missionary journey, Paul returned to Jerusalem and encountered trouble as a non-believing Jewish crowd sought to take his life as they accused him of steering people away from the law of Moses. As Paul began to make his defense, he chose to do so in Aramaic—the language of those who accused him—which quieted the crowd as he spoke. Paul stressed his loyalty to his Jewish faith and upbringing—he was a “Hebrew of Hebrews” (v. 3). He emphasized his zeal for God—which was as great as theirs—having persecuted followers of “the Way” (vs. 4-5). And then he detailed his conversion (vs. 6-16), a product of divine initiative, not his own, which included the affirmation of Ananias, whom he characterized as a devout observer of the law. Ananias is one whose name Paul’s audience would have recognized; the Jews highly respected him. He spoke of Ananias, who restored his sight after the Lord blinded him on the road to Damascus. All these details set the stage, establishing his credibility as to why they should trust what he would say next. Paul described the vision where the Lord told him to leave Jerusalem and bring salvation to the Gentiles. This detail was the tipping point for the Jewish crowd, who believed making Gentiles into Christians without *first* making them Jewish was an abomination! The crowd’s outburst prompted the Roman officials to take Paul away for flogging, but much to the official’s surprise, Paul announced his Roman citizenship, which protects him from being unduly charged and condemned without a proper trial; to do so is a severe offense. Paul, doing as instructed by Jesus, was spared judgment because of where his citizenship lies; the same is true for everyone who trusts in Christ. Though we face trials, we are spared *ultimate* judgment because our citizenship lies in heaven with Christ the King.

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of Acts 21:37-22:29.

Paul makes a thorough and compelling defense as to why the crowd should trust him, yet the crowd still rejects him. What correlations can you make between Paul’s experience and your own as a believer?

Paul was spared unjust punishment because he was a Roman citizen—but that wasn’t always the case—he often faced difficult trials. Does it trouble you as a believer that God doesn’t always steer us away from injustice? Is there any consolation?

If there’s one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of Scripture, what is that thing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today’s themes in what you bring before God.