

waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.'

¹⁷ "After I returned to Jerusalem, I was praying in the Temple and fell into a trance. ¹⁸ I saw a vision of Jesus saying to me, 'Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won't accept your testimony about me.'

¹⁹ "'But Lord,' I argued, 'they certainly know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. ²⁰ And I was in complete agreement when your witness Stephen was killed. I stood by and kept the coats they took off when they stoned him.'

²¹ "But the Lord said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!'"

7. Discussion: (a) Explain why Paul's background was an important part of his defense. (b) What aspects of Paul's story must have been the most difficult for his Jewish audience to accept? Why? (c) Why do you think Paul went ahead and talked about some parts of his story that would likely offend his Jewish countrymen? (d) If you have ever been tempted to avoid telling people about parts of the story of your journey with Jesus, tell why you were tempted to leave out those parts of your story. (e) What are the most important parts of your journey with Jesus that should always be told?

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An Interactive Life Application Bible Study of the Acts of the Apostles for Small Groups

Key: Blue = New Testament Red = Words of Jesus
Green = Old Testament Quotes

Lesson 28

1. Introduction: In Lesson 27 Paul and four other men went to the Temple to set a limited time for observing a Nazirite vow. They would not drink alcohol or have their hair cut during the designated time of their vow. Paul had promised to pay for the sacrifices that accompanied this ritual. It was Paul's way to demonstrate that, contrary to the criticism of his Jewish enemies, he was, in fact, still a practicing Jew.

2. Paul Is Arrested in Jerusalem.

Acts 21:27-36 The seven days were almost ended [which would complete the ritual Paul and four men had made to fulfill a Nazirite vow] when some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the Temple and roused a mob against him. They grabbed him, ²⁸ yelling, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who preaches against our people everywhere and tells everybody to disobey the Jewish laws. He speaks against the Temple—and even defiles this holy place by bringing in Gentiles." ²⁹ (For earlier that day they had seen him in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus, and they assumed Paul had taken him into the Temple.)

³⁰ The whole city was rocked by these accusations, and a great riot followed. Paul was grabbed and dragged out of the Temple, and immediately the gates were closed behind him. ³¹ As they were trying to kill him, word reached the commander of the Roman regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³² He immediately called out his soldiers and officers and ran down among the crowd. When the mob saw the commander and the troops coming, they stopped beating Paul.

Acts 21:33-36 Then the commander arrested him and ordered him bound with two chains. He asked the crowd who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ Some shouted one thing and some another. Since he couldn't find out the truth in all the uproar and confusion, he ordered that Paul be taken to the fortress. ³⁵ As Paul reached the stairs, the mob grew so violent the soldiers had to lift him to their shoulders to protect him. ³⁶ And the crowd followed behind, shouting, "Kill him, kill him!"

3. Discussion: (a) What false accusation did the crowd make against Paul? (b) Do you know any examples of mobs today being stirred to anger without any solid basis in fact? Why do you think this happens?

4. Paul explains his background to the commander.

Acts 21:37-40 As Paul was about to be taken inside, he said to the commander, "May I have a word with you?"

"Do you know Greek?" the commander asked, surprised. ³⁸ "Aren't you the Egyptian who led a rebellion some time ago and took 4,000 members of the Assassins out into the desert?"

³⁹ "No," Paul replied, "I am a Jew and a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia, which is an important city. Please, let me talk to these people." ⁴⁰ The commander agreed, so Paul stood on the stairs and motioned to the people to be quiet. Soon a deep silence enveloped the crowd, and he addressed them in their own language, Aramaic.

5. Discussion: How does language, citizenship and culture sometimes affect disputes? In this case why was Paul's background, education and experience important?

6. Paul Speaks to the Crowd

Acts 22:1-21 "Brothers and esteemed fathers," Paul said,

"listen to me as I offer my defense." ² When they heard him speaking in their own language, [Aramaic] the silence was even greater.

³ Then Paul said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel [a highly respected Jewish teacher]. As his student, I was carefully trained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. ⁴ And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison. ⁵ The high priest and the whole council of elders can testify that this is so. For I received letters from them to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, authorizing me to bring the Christians from there to Jerusalem, in chains, to be punished.

⁶ "As I was on the road, approaching Damascus about noon, a very bright light from heaven suddenly shone down around me. ⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'

⁸ "'Who are you, lord?' I asked.

"And the voice replied, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, the one you are persecuting.' ⁹ The people with me saw the light but didn't understand the voice speaking to me.

¹⁰ "I asked, 'What should I do, Lord?'

"And the Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything you are to do.'

¹¹ "I was blinded by the intense light and had to be led by the hand to Damascus by my companions. ¹² A man named Ananias lived there. He was a godly man, deeply devoted to the law, and well regarded by all the Jews of Damascus. ¹³ He came and stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, regain your sight.' And that very moment I could see him!

¹⁴ "Then he told me, 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and hear him speak. ¹⁵ For you are to be his witness, telling everyone what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ What are you