

ACTS 18: Paul makes his defense

Today we're taking a look at Chapters 22 through 25, which is a lot more territory than we had been covering in each of the previous lessons. And one of the reasons that we did that is in this section Paul gives his defense several times and we thought we would consolidate those defenses into one lesson and take a look at Paul and what he is communicating in his defense of the gospel. Today is the first of four defensive speeches given by Paul in ACTS 22:1-21. During today's lesson also, we're going to be doing something that we have not done much of in the past and that is I'm going to be reading more of the text to you as we are going through these chapters, because we were mentioning a lot of different people - Felix, Festus Agrippa, and others. And we're also mentioning different locations, Jerusalem, Caesarea, and a couple of others. So, we're going to go through this together and take a look at the truth in here and see what Paul is facing during his imprisonment and so forth. So, let's begin with prayer and ask God to bless our time together. Wherever you are today, if you're studying this on CD or listening on CD or watching on DVD, we welcome you. And let's begin with prayer. In the NAME of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord Jesus, oh, how we love you and adore you. You're the reason that we're here. We thank you for giving us your WORD. Thank you for giving us the Spirit of God to illuminate your WORD. Help us, Lord, to understand more clearly the series of events that Paul went through and how this impacts the spreading of the gospel in the world and eventually to us and things that we can learn from the text. Open our hearts we pray, and we ask for the intercession of our dear mother, Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. St. Augustine, pray for us. St. Paul, pray for us. In the NAME of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Well, Acts chapter 22, 23, 24 and 25 give us a good glimpse of **how to tell a testimony**. *How to Tell Your Testimony* is something that some of us might not be really familiar with or might not think we have a testimony to share because we were never into drugs. We never ran into alcohol. We don't have this down-and-out story. We didn't leave the church. And so, we feel like we don't have a testimony. But here's the story of the apostle Paul, who has a powerful conversion experience, who never saw himself as someone who was doing wrong in Judaism but had a good conscience, as we read in today's texts, but had a powerful conversion experience in chapter nine and then goes on now to tell in a number of places this testimony of his which was predicted by Jesus that he would have opportunity to share his testimony. And so, the first 21 verses of chapter two, we're going to go through the structure of his testimony, which seems to be similar every time he tells it. He starts with

1. What life was like before Christ
2. How he encountered Christ
3. What has happened since and what are the orders that the Lord has given him since his powerful conversion experience.

And I have myself taken my own sharing of my testimony after Paul. I have copied Paul, in a sense, in particularly with the way that he starts off his testimony on a number of occasions. For example, in chapter 22, he says, *Brethren, and fathers hear the defense which I now make before you.*

1. Began by speaking the Hebrew language
2. *I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia* (Tarsus is in the southeastern corner of modern-day Turkey) *but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel. Educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as you are all this day.* (Pedigree)

Okay, so he gives a little bit of his pedigree and that's the way I share my testimony. You know, if I have the opportunity or somebody asks a question, I started off with always the same words, *I was raised an average American Catholic boy*. That's the way I always start my testimony off is to talk about where I came from, *I was born and raised an average American Catholic boy*, and then I go into my upbringing, *not that exciting in terms of the faith, but I went to Mass every week. I was baptized. I was confirmed,*

went to the feast days went to Confession now and then our family didn't talk about the faith very much. We prayed the blessing over the food and dinner we pray it prayed in our father before we went to bed and Hail Mary. And that was pretty much the extent of my growing up. Paul has a different story. Paul was trained by Gamaliel and he was a Pharisee of Pharisees from the tribe of Benjamin, according to the law, blameless and so he starts off with what life was like before Christ and His relationship to Christianity. Now, for most of us here, we don't have this incredible testimony like Paul, but we do have conversion experiences in our lives. Nobody ended up where they're at today just instantly, but there's been conversion experiences and that's the kind of testimony that we can tell people. *Let me tell you how God changed my marriage. Let me tell you how God changed my financial situation. Let me tell you how God changed my work situation or raising the kids one time.* You go back into your story, we all have a story, like a multi-faceted ballroom glove when light shines on it. Lights are all over the room, crystal ball type thing. It's multifaceted, like the body of Christ. Everybody has a different story to share, and every story needs to be shared. Well Paul starts off with, *I was a Jew born a Jew at Tarsus in Cilicia.* And then he goes on and he says in verse four, *I persecuted The Way to the death.* He's telling about his attitude towards Christianity before he encountered Christ. And if I were telling my testimony, and I may say, you know, I was born an average American raised an average American Catholic boy. But my idea about Christianity was this. I didn't persecute people to death, but I had an attitude towards Christianity or an attitude towards those who were fanatical in my mind about Jesus. *I persecuted this Way to death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women as the high priest and the whole council of elders bear me witness from them. I received letters to the brethren, and I journeyed to Damascus.* He's telling how he initially encountered Christ, *I traveled the journey to Damascus to take those who also were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. As I made my journey in journey to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? And I answered, who are you Lord? And He said to me, I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.* Now those who were with me saw the light, but they did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. 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. And when 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. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken by all the Jews who live there, came to me and standing by me, said, Brother Saul, receive your sight and in that very hour I received my sight and I saw him, and he said, The God of our fathers appointed you. The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, to see the Just One and to hear a voice from His mouth, for you will be a witness for Him to all men, of that of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His NAME. And notice there's a pause for a second after verse 16. Ananias has said that God has appointed three things. He's appointed you to

1. Know His will,
2. To see Him, the Just One and to hear His voice
3. Be considered an apostle

Remember when Judas office was replaced one of the criteria was that they had to have been with the Lord. They had to have seen the Lord, been taught by the Lord. Paul was not one of the 12 apostles and is considered an apostle, and this later becomes debatable, particularly during the Corinthians when his apostolic authority is challenged, and he backs that apostolic authority up and over a number of incidences. **Paul saw the Lord was with the Lord.** We'll see that in today's lesson and **he heard the voice of the Lord and discovered the will of the Lord** and so he really has all the credentials to be a super apostle in the same way that Peter was an apostle. In Verse 17, he says, *When I returned to Jerusalem, and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance, (similar to what Peter fell into at Joppa before he met up with Cornelius) and saw him saying to me, Make haste and get quickly out of Jerusalem, because*

97 *they will not accept your testimony about me.* So, he (Paul) has this encounter with the Lord, *And I said,*
98 *Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue, I imprisoned and beat those who believed in You*
99 *and when the blood of Stephen Your witness was shed, I also was standing by and approving, and*
100 *keeping the garments of those who killed him. And He said to me, Depart for I will send you far away to*
101 *the Gentiles.* Now, this is interesting. This is the first time that Paul tells his conversion story since his
102 conversion back in ACTS 9:1-19, and he will tell it again in chapter 26, and aspects of it a different places.
103 But what I find interesting about this is Paul has a pattern; he tells a story before he met Christ, as he
104 met Christ and life after Christ, which we can all do in our own lives here today. But everyone is listening
105 to him intently and they're taking it in up until verse 21. The minute he brings up the fact that God said
106 *Depart for I will send you far away to the Gentiles,* at that the point when he brings up the Gentiles,
107 where it says up in verse 22, *Up to this word, they listened to him. Then they lifted up their voices and*
108 *said, away with such a fellow from the earth! For he ought not to live, and as they cried out and wave*
109 *their garments and threw dust into the air.* What a scene that must have been *waving their garments,*
110 *throwing dust in the air,* this guy deserves to die. *The tribune commanded him to be brought into the*
111 *barracks, and ordered him to be examined by scourging, to find out why they shouted thus against him.*
112 Now a couple of things about that. We learned in our last lesson what the tribune was. The tribune was
113 the leader, but under the tribune was 600 to 1000 soldiers in the northwest corner of the Temple Mount
114 area, the place called fortress of Antonia and their role was to keep the peace and make sure there were
115 not insurrections, and no riots would break out. Well, it looks like one is going to break out here because
116 they're trying to kill Paul. So, the tribune intervenes, and they bring Paul into the barracks and ordered
117 him to be examined by scourging.
118 Now I'm going to pause there for just a second and backup. In verse 21, we mentioned that Paul brought
119 up this idea that he was going to go to the Gentiles. This is what set them off. And I noticed that in my
120 own testimony, and I noticed in other people's testimony, *that everybody in their family is okay with*
121 *them talking about I started to get more interested in reading Bible and started to get more interested in*
122 *going to Mass and I was praying the rosary, and the minute that they bring up something that is*
123 *radically different in their life, they're using birth control, but they're using NFP now, or that they had a*
124 *vasectomy reversal or something like that,* that's when everyone starts to get excited when there's a
125 radical change that's taking place in your life they're not used to it. And people feel that, and this
126 happened to me when I reverted back to the Catholic Church. All I did was tell my story, that I came
127 back to the Catholic Church. What was life like before the Catholic Church. How did I discover the
128 Catholic Church and what has life been like since I've been back in the Catholic Church. I had one lady
129 who was listening to my story, and she got up and she was so angry. And at that point, she said, *I don't*
130 *want to listen to anyone.* And all I did was tell my story that I had come back, and I now believe in
131 praying to the saints. I believe in the Eucharist, the Sacrifice of the Mass and so forth. And her answer to
132 me was interesting. And I'm wondering if this is what the leaders are feeling when Paul is telling them
133 about going to the Gentiles. This lady said to me, *are you telling me that I'm wrong? I never said you*
134 *were wrong. I just told you what Jesus has done in my life and brought me back to the Church and how*
135 *my life has changed.* And there was that feeling of conviction of, *you're telling me that I'm wrong now!*
136 And I never said that; I never intended that.
137 These people now are suddenly very excited about Paul, and then they want to kill him. Well, the
138 tribune brings in Paul for scourging. The Roman scourging is no small thing. Roman scourging is done
139 with what is called a **cat o' nine tails**. A cat 'o nine tails is a whip with leather strips. And it is built in such
140 a way where they embed pieces of metal and glass and bone into glass like particles into the leather so
141 that when you whip someone, the straps wrap around the flesh, and then there's a pull, and so there's a
142 ripping of the flesh. So, Paul is about to get it here. He's about to get a good scourging. But what we're
143 going to see here is that in three ways in today's readings, ACTS 20-24. Paul **plays three cards**, and he
144 waits for the opportune time to play a card. I have a feeling Paul knew he was going to be a martyr and

that he was going to be dying for the faith. He knew that. But he has a plan in mind, because Jesus has appointed him to go to Rome. And so, he's doing everything he can supernaturally in prayer and in the natural also to preserve his life. I mean, Paul is not a dummy. Paul is the one who wrote Colossians 1:24 that, *I rejoice in my suffering for your sake*. Yet he finds ways to get out of some of this suffering. He's using his head. In other words, I guess what I'm saying is Paul would have taken a Tylenol. Okay. Paul was not so big into suffering, even though he understood the value of suffering.

FIRST CARD: He also understood the value of his mission, that his mission is number one, but if his mission brings suffering, he knows what to do with that suffering and offer it up to Christ. Well, here he's about to be whipped with a scourging of the Romans. And he says in ACTS 23:22, *Up to this word, they listened to him, they lifted up their voices, (Verse 24) the tribune commanded him to be brought into the barracks ordered him to be scourged. Verse 25 says, but when they had tied him with the thongs, Paul, (he plays his 1st Card), he says to the centurion, who's standing by, Is it lawful for you to Scourge a man who is a Roman citizen, and un-condemned?* You see it was illegal to scourge a Roman citizen without a fair trial. And so, Paul is just asking this sort of side question; he is not really to be discouraged with, by the way, it is illegal to scourge a Roman citizen without a fair trial, someone who is not condemned and *when the centurion heard that he went to the tribunal, and said to him, What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen.* Now, you could become a Roman citizen in a number of ways. One way that you could become a Roman citizen is that you

1. **Buy it** - You could purchase citizenship, with the right amount of money, you could purchase citizenship
2. **Performing a heroic act that you gave or did and** you were awarded citizenship by the Empire for some type of reward of something to acknowledge an accomplishment in your life.
3. **Born a citizen.** And Paul was born in Tarsus, which is in the southeast corner of modern-day Turkey.

He is fully a citizen now and it's kind of interesting because Paul's life is sort of like Jesus, in a way in that Jesus, you know, the *hypostatic union*. The **hypostatic union is that Jesus is one person, two natures is a divine nature. 100% Divine and 100% human.** Okay it's kind of interesting. He has Roman citizenship, 100% And as a Jew, he has citizenship there in Israel. So, he has this dual citizenship, which helps him wherever he goes. So, it says in verse 27, *so the tribunal came and said to him, Tell me, are you a Roman citizen? And he said, Yes. And the tribunal answered, I bought this citizenship for a large sum. In other words, he was one in that category of I bought my citizenship. Paul said, but I was born a citizen.* I have full citizenship. *So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him instantly. And the tribune also was afraid for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen, and that he had bound him. But on the morrow the next day desiring to know the real reason why the Jews accused him, he unbound him, and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet.* When we speak about the council there, You're talking about the Supreme Court, the Sanhedrin, the Sanhedrin is like standing before the Supreme Court, *and he brought Paul down and set him before them.*

Now we move into Acts 23 and Paul is giving his witness, his defense again, but he's giving it before the chief priests and the council. Okay, so he's already given one defense in chapter 20. Now he's going to begin the second defense.

FIRST CARD: *And Paul looking intently at the council and said, Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience up to this day.* What's he talking about there? Paul said in his letter to the Corinthians in chapter 15, he talks about how in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 how even before he was converted, he had a good conscience. He did everything with a good conscience. He thought he was doing the right thing. He says in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, *I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I but the grace of God,*

which is in me to see (before he was converted, he had a good conscience). And here he says, *Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience up to this day*, and at that point, Ananias is the high priest, and Paul apparently doesn't recognize and apply. We're not exactly sure, but he doesn't recognize him as the high priest, and is who is not to be confused with Ananias, which was earlier in chapter four, and Ananias in chapter nine, who baptized Paul, this is Ananias, the high priest. And Ananias *commanded those who stood by to strike him on the mouth*. So, the minute Paul says, *my brethren and I have lived before God in all good conscience up to this day*. The next thing he feels is a smack across the mouth. And so how does Paul respond? You know that **there are no wasted words in the Bible**. We've only got this Bible, there's no wasted words. Every word is valuable. Every word is communicating something. What is Paul's response here? Now historians write about Ananias, and he was known as a wicked, very violent, a very selfish individual, and he is the type of person that would command *smack him*. And Paul gets struck in the in the mouth, in the face, then Paul, he doesn't turn around and say, *bless you*. What does he do? He comes back immediately with a statement, *God shall strike you, you whitewashed wall!* Whoa. Now we're going to find out in a minute that he doesn't realize this is the high priest. But nevertheless, he said, *God shall strike you, you whitewashed wall*. Now Paul just blurted this statement out, *God shall strike you*. Does he just blurt it out like an emotional response? These just is this one sentence in the Bible that just happens to be just some wild emotional response to Paul. No. Every word has meaning. And what is happening here, the phrase, *The Lord shall smite you*, is used in the Old Testament. In one chapter in particular, more than any other chapter and that chapter is Deuteronomy 28. In four occasions in that chapter, that phrase, *The Lord shall smite you* is brought up in Deuteronomy 28:22, and 35. It's brought up in Deuteronomy 28. Remember, like in real estate location, location, location so in quoting Old Testament, location, location, location. What was Deuteronomy 28 about? Deuteronomy 28 is the chapter that describes in detail the covenant curses that shall come upon Israel at the hands of the Gentiles if they violate the covenant. Isn't that powerful? That is what Paul is alluding to. The Lord will strike you as mentioned four times. Once again, Deuteronomy 28 is the part of the Deuteronomic covenant that Moses laid out, and it lists everything that will happen to the Jews if they violate God's covenant with the words, *God will strike you, God will strike you*. And as it turns out, that Ananias was murdered at the very beginning of the revolt, the War of the Jews, as recorded by Josephus, and he was murdered by the Gentiles, the Romans. So, Ananias was dealt with, and Josephus records it. ACTS 23:4 says, *Those who stood by said, Would you revile God's high priest? And Paul said, and this is very beautiful how he put it, he basically apologizes and says, I did not know, Brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people*. He is quoting Exodus 22:28. He's even quoting scripture in his apology; *I didn't know that*. Nevertheless, those words I think were meant to be said. They're powerful. They were prophetic. *The Lord will strike you, you whitewashed wall*. And so, the men standing by said, *Don't you know that's the high priest. I didn't know I didn't know*. And what comes to mind immediately in Paul's sharp mind? Exodus 22:28. *You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people*. When Paul perceived that one part or Sadducees in the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council.

SECOND CARD: Now this is where Paul is going to play his second card. And it's the **resurrection card** he uses every time he gets into a place where it looks like lights are going to be out. It's like God gives him a way of escape. And you know that Paul wrote about that in Corinthians when he said, *God will not give you more than you can handle*. But with every temptation, there will be a way of escape. every difficult situation that we get into. God gives us ways of escape. And Paul certainly plays these cards. He suddenly notices, *we've got Pharisees here, and we have Sadducees here*. And Paul brings up the subject of the resurrection. Notice this (ACTS 23:6 it says, When Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, *Brethren*, so he's got an idea. Now, Paul was a Pharisee.

The Sadducees didn't believe in:

- the resurrection
- the spirit.
- life after Earth
- the oral tradition of the Jews
- any of the other writings except for the first five books of Moses.

And that's basically why Jesus, when he's speaking to the Pharaoh and to the Sadducees, *Look, we don't have anything in common. **Jesus was, for the most part, a card-carrying Pharisee.*** And he had much in common with the Pharisees, and Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisees. So, Paul, notices there's part Pharisee part Sadducees and he cried out in the council, *Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees, with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead, I am on trial.* Now, we know that nothing could have compelled Paul to put his life on the line like this in the things that he was doing in the book of Acts. If it wasn't for his staunch belief in the resurrection. (he wrote about this also in other epistles), where he talks about that **if the resurrection didn't take place, then our faith is in vain.** He saw the Lord. In fact, I wonder at times, **is that's the main difference between the early apostles and us is that the early apostles 12 of them minus Judas, then Matthias and then Paul turned the world upside down.** Without one iPod, without one wireless computer, they turned the world upside down. No iTunes, or Apple website, nothing. They turned the world upside down. **What was the difference? They saw the resurrected Lord.** Now **if you saw the resurrected Lord, and you knew that he died, and he rose from the dead, wouldn't that just compel you to give everything? Well, my friends, as Catholics, we have the same opportunity when we go to the Lord in the Sacrifice of the Mass and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, are we not seeing the resurrected Lord?** Are we not seeing evidence of his work in other people's lives? That should compel us to be as bold as Paul. What Paul is saying is he's coming down to the core of why he's being tried saying, *I'm being tried because of the hope of the resurrection that I have. And when he had said this, dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angels, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. Then a great clamor arose and some of the scribes and the Pharisees party stood up and contended, We find nothing wrong with this man.* Now think about this just a moment earlier, the Sadducees and the Pharisees were coming together and wanted Paul basically killed. And now we find that the Pharisees and their little squabble with the Sadducees must be more serious than their squabble with Paul, because they say, *You know what, at first after thinking about this, and he mentioned resurrection there and after thinking about it, We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?* The Sadducees don't believe in angels or spirits. So, the argument is sort of pushed off to the side by just Paul mentioning the resurrection. He's playing that card. Remember I explained a little bit why I think he's playing these cards. He knows he needs to get to Rome, but the question is why? *And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, is afraid that Paul would be torn in pieces by them and commanded the soldiers to go down and take, by force from among them and bring him into the barracks.* So once again, the tribune had his soldiers rescue Paul, but then in verse 11, *the following night, the Lord stood by him and said, Take courage, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome.* After Paul's conversion, the Lord appeared to him several times. We know that the Lord appeared to him in chapter nine, verses three through six. We know that the Lord appeared to be to Paul in ACTS 18:9, 22:17-18, and in 23:11, the Lord appears to him at that point.

Now, after this, there is a group of 40 or more men are going to take an oath. In other words, they are going to put a curse on themselves if they do not fulfill the terms of the oath that they're making, and here is the oath. *When it was day, and the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they have had killed Paul. There were more than 40 who made this conspiracy. And when and they went to the chief priests and elders and said, We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul. You, therefore, along with the council, give notice now to the*

289 tribune to bring him down to you as though you are going to determine his case more exactly and we are
290 ready to kill him before he comes near. So, you see all the plotting that's going on? Here he is and these
291 people want Paul dead. And Paul has one relative who happens to over here. This is the only time in the
292 scripture where there's an actual relative of Paul mentioned and who is it? It's his sister's son, it's his
293 nephew. And in verse 16, Now the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush; so he went and entered the
294 barracks and told Paul. And Paul called one of the centurions, and said, Take this young man to the
295 tribune for something to tell him. So, he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, Paul, the
296 prisoner called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, as he has something to say to you. The
297 tribune took the young man to the side and said, Tell us, what is it and what is it that you have to tell us?
298 And he said, The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though
299 they were going to inquire somewhat more closely about him But do not yield to them; for more than 40
300 of their men lie in ambush for him, having bound themselves by an oath neither to eat or drink till they
301 have killed him. And now they are ready waiting for the promise from you. So, the tribune dismissed the
302 young man, charging him, Tell no one that you have informed me of this. Then he called two of the
303 centurians and said, At the third hour of the night, the third hour of the night (which begins six o'clock
304 in the evening in the in the Jewish calendar) means nine o'clock at night. He says, Get ready to 200
305 soldiers with 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen to go as far as Caesarea. So, the idea of the tribune is
306 we're going to get him out of Jerusalem and we're going to bring him to Caesarea. Now why would they
307 want to go to Caesarea? Caesarea of Maritima, which is on the western shore of the Mediterranean
308 and 60 miles northwest of Jerusalem, was the provincial capital of Judea. It was the Roman capital of
309 Judea and was an incredible port city. Those of you that went to Israel just a few weeks ago with me, we
310 stood right there. In fact, we stood right there where archaeologists believe they have found the prison
311 where Paul was imprisoned, it says surreal. Because of the delicacy of the topic, the Vatican ask that it
312 be held back until further investigation could be done, and it could be authenticated. But we stood
313 there, and we saw many of the archaeological ruins in Caesarea. Well, that's where that's the tribune
314 wants to take Paul. And it says in verse 24, (tribune) says, Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring
315 him safely to Felix the governor. Okay, so we have now this new name, **Felix the governor.** ACTS 23:25,
316 and he (tribune) wrote a letter to this effect, Claudius Lysius to His Excellency, the governor Felix,
317 greeting. So, he's writing a letter to be sent with Paul. And the letter is going to kind of take credit for
318 Paul not being scourged you know, like, *Hey, I'm doing you guys a favor and could have been in some big*
319 *trouble here. This guy was going to be scourged by the Jews. I recognized that he was a Roman citizen*
320 *and put a stop to it, of course. Yeah. And he takes all the credit. He says (v27), This man was seized by*
321 *the Jews and was about to be killed by them, when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him*
322 *having learned that he was a Roman citizen. And he desiring to know the charge on which they accused*
323 *him, I brought him down to their council. I found that he was accused about questions of their law but*
324 *charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. And when it was disclosed to me that there*
325 *would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you*
326 *what they have against him.* So, soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by
327 night to Antipatris. Antipatris is not a person. Antipatris is a, like a holding cell or a halfway station
328 between Jerusalem and Caesarea of Maritima, which is 60 miles northwest of Jerusalem, *And the*
329 *morrow, they returned to the barracks, leaving the horseman to go on with him. When they came to*
330 *Caesarea and delivered their letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. On reading the*
331 *letter, he asked to what province he belonged, when he learned that he was from Cilicia, he said, I will*
332 *hear you when your accusers arrive.* And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's praetorium.
333 Then we move into chapter 24. *And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders*
334 *and a spokesman, one Tertullus.* Now this Tertullus is a hired gun. He is like one of these guys you see on
335 CNN and Fox, one of these attorneys, who is quite a spokesman, a great orator, and he is going to speak

for the leaders in Jerusalem and bring the accusations against Paul. And he's going to argue two basic things, ACTS 24:2-8, he's going to argue that :

1. **Paul is an enemy of the state.** It's kind of like Tertullus is speaking on behalf of the elders in Jerusalem, but really what is at the heart of this? *We are concerned about Rome and about unrest and we know that this is going to bother you, this Paul has caused all kinds of commotion wherever he goes. And it's a threat to the equilibrium of course of the Roman Empire, which is our number one concern of course,* you know, giving him this all of this while there's a Hebrew word for that – BOLOGNA!

2. **Paul is guilty of being a part of a new religion,** because he says in verse five, *for we have found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.* Now, **in order to be a part of a religion, or for it to be legal back then, it had to be recognized and approved by the Roman Empire.** Now there were different sects within Judaism. There were the Pharisees, for example. This word **sect** in a positive way could also mean a party, the party of the Pharisees, the party of the Sadducees, the party of the **Essenes**¹, John the Baptist was believed to be an Essene - the party of the Zealots, but there was also the party of the Nazarenes or the sect of the Nazarenes, which is here used in a *pejorative (a word expressing contempt or disapproval)* way to describe them in a negative way. But they were in fact simply a part of Judaism in the first century and were accepted by most all the way up until 90 AD after the temple was destroyed in 70. And course the Christians (The WAY), fled to Pella on the other side over in Jordan. They did not fight against the Romans in the revolt, no Christians died. So, after this great destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews met with the Christians and at the **Council of Jamina**², which is on the Mediterranean coast, they determined a **benediction for the heretics**³, and there was a formal split at that point. But at this point, the Christians are simply a part of The Way that they called the sect of the Nazarene. And that sect of the Nazarenes in verse five has two connotations.

1. Nazareth: One is that he was from the village of Nazareth

2. Prophecy in Isaiah 11: The second which is more subtle, and we spoke about this in our last series on the Gospel of Matthew, is that there is a prophecy in Isaiah 11 And Isaiah 11:1 states that the Messiah is described as a branch, (*netzer*) in Hebrew, **who is going to sprout from the stump of Jesse.** Now who was Jesse? He was the father of David. The Davidic Kingdom looked like it came to an end in 587 BC when the Babylonians came and took the last king, Zedekiah, into captivity. He was caught on the plains of Jericho and his eyes were poked out and he was bound and brought into Babylonian captivity. It looks like this thing has come to an end, that the line of David has been cut off; but it hasn't been cut off. It's kind of is dormant for a while, and is described as a stump, the stump of Jesse, and **a branch will sprout from the stump of Jesse, and that is who Jesus is.** He is that branch the *netzer*. And so, there's a kind of a double meaning there with a sect of the Nazarenes, those who follow this one who is from Nazareth, but also the one who is the Messiah. So, moving on, verse 17, a cover a little bit more ground here. Paul is giving his defense and he's speaking, and he says in verse 17, *Now after some years I came to bring to my nation alms and offerings.* Okay? I like what he says in verse 16, too, where it says, *so I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward God and toward men.*

Now, after some years I came to bring to my nation alms and offerings. As I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult, but some Jews from Asia, - they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, if they have anything against me. Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, except this one thing which I cried out while standing among them, With respect to the resurrection of the dead. And I and I am on trial before you this day." I want to back up for just a moment in verse 17. He mentions *alms and offerings*. Remember we talked about that in earlier lesson, quoting Romans 15? Where Paul, remember he had been out there among the Gentiles and he had been taking offerings, and his desire was to bring the offerings to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. **And you remember the day he wanted to make sure he was in Jerusalem for the feast, Pentecost, when the first fruits are brought in. He wanted to bring in**

the money for the church in Jerusalem to show them the first fruits of the proclamation of the gospel among the Gentiles. Well, ACTS 24:24 it says, *After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla. who was a Jewish; and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about upon faith in Christ Jesus.* Now he speaks with Felix and gives a defense to Felix, and listen to the three things that he's talking to Felix about (Verse 25)

1. JUSTICES
2. SELF-CONTROL
3. FUTURE JUDGMENT

And Felix was alarmed at this and said, *Go away for the present. When I have an opportunity, I'll summon you.* He's obviously bothered. He's alarmed. But I asked you the question, why? The reason we believe why he was so alarmed is because Drusilla (Felix's wife) was one of the daughters of Herod Agrippa and she was Felix's third wife, and Felix was her second husband. There's been a lot of things going on here and what Paul talked to him about is justice, self-control, and a future judgment. No wonder he was alarmed. But also, if you read down to verse 26 it says, *At the same time, he hoped that money would be given him by Paul.* So, he obviously is aware that Paul had been collecting money to give to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. And so, he keeps having Paul come in and says, *I want to hear more.* Perhaps he's hoping Paul will say, look, *Will \$2,000 take care of this? Free me up. I got a lot of work to do. I got to get back to the office to tons of emails to get to, and things to do. Will \$2,000 take care of it?* Maybe he's hoping for that. But we see no evidence of Paul doing that. In ACTS 17:7, Porcius Festus replaces Felix in 59 AD, and Paul had been left in prison in Caesarea at this point for two years. We move into ACTS 25:3, where you can see that after two years, the anger of the leadership in Jerusalem had not subsided and had not calmed down at all. Now with Festus as the new leader, they see a chance to kill him again.

THIRD CARD: So it says in verse 25, *Now, when Festus had come into his province, after three days, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea, and the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they urged him asking as a favor to have the man sent to Jerusalem planning an ambush to kill him on the way. Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to go there shortly. So said he let the of men have authority among you go down with me and if there's anything wrong about the man, let them accuse him.* When he had stayed among them, not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea; and the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. And when he had come, the Jews who had gone down from Jerusalem stood about him, bringing against him many serious charges. And then later on for the sake of time moving ahead, it says in verse 11 (Paul), *If then I am a wrongdoer, and I have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death.* In other words, if I did anything wrong, deserving death, I'll die. *But if there's nothing in their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.* He plays the third card, then Festus when he had conferred with his counsel answered, *You have appealed to Caesar and to Caesar you shall go.* He had a right. And so, he plays that third card. Now, I want to ask you this. Why is Paul so intent on going to Rome? Here's one of the reasons I believe in Daniel 2 - Paul was familiar with Daniel 2 in the vision that Nebuchadnezzar had of the statue with the head of gold, the chest of silver, the loins of bronze and feet of clay, for successive kingdoms, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, clay and iron. And after that fourth kingdom comes a fifth kingdom and it is a small stone *hewn out of a mountain without human hands* and it will grow into a large mountain, and it'll topple these kingdoms. Paul knows he has to get to Rome. But Paul's appearance before King Agrippa is a fulfillment of what Jesus said would happen to his followers. *They will be brought before kings and governors for my namesake to bear testimony.* Remember, Jesus said that in Luke 21:12-13. He said that *you will be brought in for kings and governors to bear witness.* And that's what Paul is doing here. And Jesus applied this prophecy to Paul in particular, in His revelation to Ananias (because Ananias didn't want anything to do with Paul) back in Acts 9:15 which says, *But the Lord said to him, Go, go for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and*

kings and Sons of Israel, for I shall show him how much he must suffer for the sake of My NAME. It's interesting; here's Paul, he knows he's going to go to Rome, and he probably has an idea that he's going to die in Rome, but he's going to die the way his master died, and the gospel will go forward. But I want to end this lesson by drawing one interesting point. Paul is going to Rome and the gospel will go to the Gentiles around the world. But look where it started - one man who was afraid of the mission that God called him to. And God said to Ananias, **you must go to Paul because I have called him to go before kings and governors. If you don't do what you're called to do, then he won't go to kings and governors and you know what, this is a perfect description of the Body of Christ.** There are some people who are called to speak publicly. There are some who are called to speak and to meet kings and governors around the world. But I'll guarantee you one thing - behind every person that speaks before kings and governors, before every person who is publicly giving witness and proclaiming and bearing testimony to Jesus Christ, there is an Ananias, there are people who all along the way in Paul's life *helped him out of buildings*, told him interesting things they overheard *like nephews*, there were a lot of little people who *did the work that help Paul*, not everyone can be a Paul, but everyone has a part. I have the privilege of studying and I have the privilege of traveling all over the world and bearing witness to Jesus Christ, but I'll tell you this you know what the number one comment I get from people as I leave their city. This last weekend I was in Boca Raton, Florida and two people came up to me and the number one comment I get is this. *I want to thank you for coming. But will you do me a favor?* Thanks to someone else and you know who that someone else is? *They say thank Emily. Thank your wife*, for allowing me to come here and supporting this day. For everyone who's bearing witness there is an Ananias. We all have a role to play and that's the beautiful thing about the book of Acts - this **tremendous tapestry that comes together**. And you and I would not be sitting here today if it was not for Ananias, wasn't for Ananias, who filled with fear, broke through and said *okay, Lord, I'll do this for you. I'll speak to Paul. Because Paul has a mission*. How many of us are called to help other people because they have a mission, and we all share in the mission. The Church is the Body of Christ; different parts, different functions, that there's one baton(?). Let us pray.

In the NAME of the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord, we thank you for Paul's calling and thank you for Ananias today. We say today, thank you for the work that these people did along the life of Paul that would allow him to go to Rome and proclaim the gospel as we're going to see in our next study. Help us Lord to never despise small beginnings and the little seemingly insignificant assignments that you give us that they shall bear much fruit. We pray this in Jesus NAME. Amen. In the NAME of the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ **Essenes:** A mystic Jewish sect during the Second Temple period that flourished from the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE. The Jewish historian Josephus records that Essenes existed in large numbers, thousands lived throughout Roman Judaea. They were fewer in number than the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the other two major sects at the time. The Essenes lived in various cities but congregated in communal life dedicated to voluntary poverty, daily immersion, and asceticism (their priestly class practiced celibacy). Most scholars claim they seceded from the Zadokite priests.

The Essenes have gained fame in modern times as a result of the discovery of an extensive group of religious documents known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are commonly believed to be the Essenes' library. These documents preserve multiple copies of parts of the Hebrew Bible untouched from possibly as early as 300 BCE until their discovery in 1946. The first reference to the sect is by the Roman writer Pliny the Elder (died 79 CE) in his *Natural History*. Pliny relates in a few lines that the Essenes possess no money, had existed for thousands of generations, and that their priestly class ("contemplatives") do not marry. Unlike Philo, who did not mention any particular geographical location of the Essenes other than the whole land of Israel, Pliny places them somewhere above Ein Gedi, next to the Dead Sea.

Josephus later gave a detailed account of the Essenes in *The Jewish War* (c. 75 CE), with a shorter description in *Antiquities of the Jews* (c. 94 CE) and *The Life of Flavius Josephus* (c. 97 CE). Claiming firsthand knowledge, he lists the *Essenoi* as one of the three sects of Jewish philosophy alongside the Pharisees and the Sadducees. He relates the same information concerning piety, celibacy, the absence of personal property and of money, the belief in communality, and commitment to a strict observance of Sabbath. He further adds that the Essenes ritually immersed in water every morning—a practice similar to the use of the mikveh for daily immersion found among some contemporary Hasidim—ate together after prayer, devoted themselves to charity and benevolence, forbade the expression of anger, studied the books of the elders, preserved secrets, and were very mindful of the names of the angels kept in their sacred writings. Pliny, also a geographer, located them in the desert near the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essenes>

² **Council of Jamnia:** The 1st-century Council of Jamnia (Jabneh) is where the limits of the Jewish canon are said to have been finalized. This canon rejects the Apocrypha. Opinions about this council are varied and contradictory. The Roman Catholic Church, which accepts the Apocrypha as inspired Scripture, denies that such a council ever happened. Many non-Catholic scholars, who reject the Apocrypha, use the Council of Jamnia to bolster their claim that the Jewish canon had been settled and closed by the end of the first century and that the early church accepted this canon as binding. Roman Catholic scholars counter that there is no reason that Christians should accept the conclusions of the Council of Jamnia (if it ever happened at all), especially considering that the Jewish canon may have been influenced by the Jewish rejection of Christ and animosity against the early church. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) was used extensively by the early Gentile Christians. Paul often quotes from it in his letters. The Septuagint contained the Apocrypha. Catholic scholars claim the rabbis may have rejected the Apocrypha precisely because it was in “the Bible of the early church.” (On a side note, even this argument demonstrates that the Apocrypha was treated differently than the rest of the Old Testament. For instance, the early church relied heavily upon Isaiah, but there was no Jewish rejection of Isaiah.) As a rejoinder, many Protestants point out that the Roman Catholic Church never officially affirmed the Apocrypha as inspired until the Council of Trent (1545—1563). This affirmation was influenced by their rejection of Protestantism, which also rejected the Apocrypha. If there were early documents that clearly recorded the activities of the Council of Jamnia, there might be fewer grounds for controversy. However, the existence of the council was first proposed in the mid-18th century based on inferences from earlier sources. There is no clear evidence that Jewish leadership held a specific council where the OT canon was settled once and for all. If such a council did happen, there is no way to determine if it was clearly “authoritative” because “official” Judaism was in disarray as the temple had been destroyed and the Jews were scattered across the Roman Empire. While questions about the Council of Jamnia may be interesting from the standpoint of historiography, it seems that questions about whether or not the Apocrypha should be included in the canon of the Christian Bible are best settled on other grounds.

³ **Benediction of Heretics:** The *Birkat haMinim* is a curse on heretics which forms part of the Jewish rabbinical liturgy. It is the twelfth in the series of eighteen benedictions (*Shemoneh Esreh*) that constitute the core of prayer service in the statutory daily 'standing prayer' of religious Jews. There has been a general consensus that the eighteen benedictions generally go back to some form in the Second Temple period but the origins of this particular prayer and its earliest wording are disputed in modern scholarship, between those who argue for a very early date, either sometime prior to, or roughly contemporary with the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and those who hold that the formulation crystallized several decades or centuries later. Pinning down its date figures prominently since it is widely taken to indicate the moment when a definitive rupture arose between Judaism and Christianity. In the early premodern form in Europe, the curse was applied to several kinds of people or groups: Jews who apostatized to Christianity; Christians themselves; the enemies of the Jews, and to the governing authorities of the Christian world. From the 13th century, the terminology used in the prayer and

529 rabbinical explications of their referent, Christians, began to undergo a process of censorship, imposed from
530 outside or regulated internally, once Christian authorities learnt of them through information supplied by Jewish
531 converts and from scholars who began to access the texts in the original language. There is no single,
532 uniform Ashkenazi or Sephardic liturgy, and marked differences may exist between prayer books issued by the
533 rabbinates in, for example, England, Israel, or the United States. In modern times, Jews who regularly attend the
534 synagogue only on the Sabbath rarely hear it, if ever since on the Sabbath and holidays an alternative version
535 lacking reference to *minim* is used. It is mandated for prayer every day among Orthodox Jews, and is recited five
536 times by precentors six days every week. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birkat_haMinim
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