

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

LESSON 26: CHAPTER 22:1-23:10

27 November 2015

PAUL'S DEFENSE IN JERUSALEM

VSS. 1-16 Paul begins defending himself before the Jewish people. He spends a lot of time talking about himself and emphasizing his Jewish upbringing and Law-keeping. He finally mentions Jesus of Nazareth in verse 8.

His testimony here in verses 8-16 closely matches the account given in chapter 9, except he gives it a Jewish emphasis (Ananias the devout law keeper in vs. 12, purification by water in vs. 16).

Note: Paul was born again and baptized by the Holy Spirit three days before Ananias suggested that he follow the Jewish ritual of baptism for purification (see John 2:6). Paul is not teaching the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration (Alexander Campbell, Church of Christ). He's trying to show the Jews that he kept the Jewish Law.

Vss. 17-18 After Paul's conversion and meeting with Ananias, he went back to Jerusalem where he was firmly commanded by the Lord to get out of Jerusalem quickly. The Lord told Paul in no uncertain terms, concerning the people of Jerusalem, "**They will not receive thy testimony concerning me.**" So why is Paul there now? His love for souls deceived him into going against the word of God. That doesn't make him a devil. It makes him apostate and in need of restoration.

Vss. 19-20 Paul said he argued with the Lord about leaving Jerusalem. He assumed that his testimony would be powerful and impressive in Jerusalem because of his reputation there as a strict Pharisee. Again the Lord told Paul, Depart! --Paul is in the city of Jerusalem—telling the Jews that the Lord commanded him not to go there—because they will never listen to him. This is the result of being in the flesh—out of the will of God. No man is perfect.

Vss. 21-24 Paul reveals that the Lord Jesus sent him "**unto the Gentiles.**" Before Paul spoke "**this word**" (vs. 22), the Jews were listening to him, but now they want to kill him again. They became riotous, so the chief captain brought Paul to the castle to be "**examined by scourging**" (vs. 24). They found it hard to believe that a man could be innocent if the people hated him so much.

Vss. 25-30 As the soldiers were preparing to beat Paul, he revealed that he was a Roman citizen. Paul had status as a Roman. He knew these Gentiles would fear the Romans and avoid any possible conflict with them.

Later, in prison, Paul would write about the things pertaining to his status as a Jew and a Pharisee—and say that he now counts all those things as dung (Phil. 3: 4-8), compared to the riches of the gospel of Christ.

The Gentile captain still wants answers, but now treats Paul with respect as he gives him opportunity once again to state his case before the Jewish leaders.

ACTS CHAPTER 23

Vss. 1-3 Paul spoke to the Jewish council and told them his conscience is clean. When the high priest commanded men to smite Paul in the mouth, Paul retaliated. When he was reviled, he reviled back. When he suffered, he threatened them. (See 1 Pet. 2:23-24). He was clearly in the flesh.

Vss. 4-5 When Paul was warned not to revile God's high priest, he played ignorant. "*I didn't know he was the high priest!*" He's lying. A Pharisee raised at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) would certainly know how to identify the high priest by his garments, by his chief seat in the assembly, and by the authority which he exercises.

Vs. 6 Paul's next tactic was to distract the Jews by setting the two opposing sects (Pharisees and Sadducees) against each other. He does this by saying "**I am a Pharisee**" and stating that the reason he is being questioned is because of his belief of the resurrection of the dead, which the Sadducees oppose. He lied again to save his skin—because he's in the flesh. This is Paul without Holy Spirit power.

Great men will disappoint you sometimes: David did (1 Samuel 21:13, 2 Samuel 11). Elijah did (compare 1 Kings 18 and 19). Gideon (made an idol in Judges 8:27). Every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity (Psa. 39:5).

Paul came to Jerusalem out of love for his people (a good motive, but no Holy Spirit). Now he wants God to smite the high priest. He hasn't presented the gospel to anybody. His good motive and honorable intentions didn't hold up. Only the Holy Spirit can enable you to take abuse from others and stay focused on the goal of saving souls from hell.

Vss. 7-10 The Pharisees and Sadducees began to argue and fight among themselves. The Pharisees compromised and found Paul innocent, which caused a "great dissension" (conflict) so that Paul's life was in danger again so he was taken into the castle for safety.

Results: Nobody got saved.

Lesson: Our best efforts for God—without the power, blessing, leading, and control of God—will come to nothing. (John 15:4-5).

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. (Eccl. 7:20)

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8)