

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Acts Chapter 22 — Paul's Testimony Before the People

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Acts Chapter 22 records one of the clearest personal testimonies in the New Testament.

Paul has just been:

Seized.

Beaten.

Dragged through the streets.

Arrested.

Bound.

Surrounded by a hostile crowd.

Yet instead of asking only for protection, he asks for an opportunity to speak.

He stands on the steps before the same people who had just tried to kill him and begins:

“Brothers and fathers, listen to the defense I now make before you.”

Paul does not begin by insulting the crowd.

He does not retaliate.

He does not accuse them.

Instead:

He tells his story.

He explains:

Who he was.

What he believed.

How strongly he opposed Christianity.

How Jesus confronted him.

How his life changed.

How God called him.

And why he now preaches to the Gentiles.

Paul's testimony has three major movements.

First:

His life before Christ.

He had been:

Religiously trained.

Zealous.

Educated under Gamaliel.

Devoted to ancestral traditions.

Violently opposed to Christians.

Second:

His encounter with Christ.

On the road to Damascus:

A light shines from heaven.

Paul falls.

Jesus speaks.

Paul discovers the shocking truth:

The Jesus he opposed is alive.

And persecuting Christians meant persecuting:

Jesus Himself.

Third:

His calling after conversion.

Through Ananias, Paul learns that God has chosen him:

To know His will.

To see the Righteous One.

To hear His voice.

To become a witness.

Then, in Jerusalem, the Lord tells him:

“Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.”

That statement triggers the crowd.

They had listened through:

Paul’s Jewish background.

His education.

His persecution of Christians.

His vision.

His conversion.

But when Paul says God sent him to the Gentiles:

The crowd explodes.

They shout:

“Away with such a man from the earth! He’s not fit to live!”

The Roman commander then orders Paul examined by flogging.

But Paul calmly asks:

“Is it lawful to scourge a Roman citizen who hasn’t been tried?”

Everything stops.

Paul’s Roman citizenship becomes a means of protection.

Once again:

God uses an earthly legal status as part of His providential care.

Acts 22 therefore teaches us that:

A personal testimony can become a powerful tool for proclaiming Christ.

Religious zeal without truth can oppose God.

Jesus can transform even the fiercest enemy of the church.

Conversion leads to calling and witness.

The gospel belongs to all nations.

And:

Believers may lawfully use civil rights without compromising faith.

The central truth of Acts 22 is:

Jesus Christ can transform the most determined opponent into a faithful witness, and believers should courageously testify to His grace while trusting God to use both spiritual calling and earthly circumstances to accomplish His purposes.

I. PAUL BEGINS HIS DEFENSE

Acts 22:1

“Brothers and fathers, listen to the defense I now make before you.”

Paul addresses the crowd respectfully.

Cross References

Acts 7:2

Stephen had begun his own defense with similar respectful language toward the Jewish leaders.

Acts 24:10

Paul later gives another defense before a Roman governor.

2 Timothy 4:16

Paul later remembers standing alone during one of his legal defenses.

Spiritual Principle

Respectful speech does not require surrendering truth.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A Christian witness can speak firmly without speaking disrespectfully.

II. THE CROWD BECOMES QUIET

Acts 22:2

“When they heard him speak in Hebrew, they became very quiet. He said:”

Paul speaks in the language of his audience.

Cross References

Acts 21:40

Paul had already gained permission to address the crowd from the steps.

Acts 26:14

Paul later recounts that Jesus addressed him in the Hebrew language.

Acts 21:37

The Roman commander had been surprised that Paul could speak Greek.

Spiritual Principle

Wise communication considers the audience without changing the truth.

III. PAUL DESCRIBES HIS JEWISH BACKGROUND

Acts 22:3

“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but raised here in Jerusalem. I was trained at the feet of Gamaliel in the strict law of our ancestors. I was as zealous for God as any of you are today.”

Paul establishes common ground.

He understands them.

Why?

Because he once thought as they did.

Cross References

Acts 5:34

Gamaliel was a respected Pharisee and teacher of the law.

Philippians 3:5

Paul later describes his strong Jewish heritage, circumcision, and Pharisaic identity.

Galatians 1:14

Paul said he had advanced in Judaism beyond many of his contemporaries because of his intense zeal for ancestral traditions.

Spiritual Principle

Religious sincerity and religious education do not automatically guarantee spiritual truth.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

You can be sincerely zealous for God and still be sincerely wrong about God.

IV. PAUL PERSECUTED “THE WAY”

Acts 22:4

“I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison.”

Paul does not soften his past.

He admits it.

Cross References

Acts 8:3

Saul had entered homes, dragged out men and women, and committed believers to prison.

Acts 9:1

Saul continued breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.

Galatians 1:13

Paul later openly confessed that he had persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A true testimony does not glorify the past, but it does honestly acknowledge what Christ rescued us from.

V. PAUL HAD OFFICIAL AUTHORITY TO PERSECUTE

Acts 22:5

“The high priest and the council of elders can testify to this. I even received letters from them to the brothers in Damascus, so that I could bring believers back to Jerusalem for punishment.”

Paul’s persecution was organized.

Legal authority supported it.

Cross References

Acts 9:2

Saul requested official letters allowing him to arrest followers of the Way in Damascus.

Acts 26:10

Paul later testified that he had imprisoned many believers with authority from the chief priests.

Acts 26:12

Paul traveled to Damascus with official authority to continue persecuting Christians.

Spiritual Principle

Human authorization does not make an action righteous if it opposes God.

VI. A LIGHT FROM HEAVEN

Acts 22:6

“As I approached Damascus around noon, suddenly a bright light from heaven surrounded me.”

Paul’s journey is interrupted.

Cross References

Acts 9:3

A sudden light from heaven flashed around Saul near Damascus.

Acts 26:13

Paul later described the light as brighter than the sun.

2 Corinthians 4:6

Paul later used the imagery of God shining light into darkness to describe spiritual illumination.

Spiritual Principle

God can interrupt a life moving confidently in the wrong direction.

VII. “SAUL, SAUL”

Acts 22:7

“I fell to the ground and heard a voice say, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’”

Jesus identifies Himself with His people.

Cross References

Acts 9:4

Jesus asked Saul directly why he was persecuting Him.

Acts 26:14

Paul later recounts the same confrontation.

1 Samuel 3:10

God had previously called Samuel personally by name.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

What is done against Christ's people matters deeply to Christ Himself.

VIII. "I AM JESUS"

Acts 22:8

"I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' He said, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'"

Everything changes here.

Paul believed Jesus was:

Dead.

False.

Dangerous.

Now:

Jesus speaks from heaven.

Cross References

Acts 9:5

Jesus identified Himself to Saul in exactly this confrontation.

Acts 26:15

Paul later repeats Jesus' words before King Agrippa.

Acts 26:9

Paul admitted that he had once believed he should vigorously oppose the name of Jesus.

Spiritual Principle

Conversion begins when a person's understanding of Jesus changes.

IX. THE COMPANIONS SAW THE LIGHT

Acts 22:9

“The men with me saw the light but didn’t understand the voice speaking to me.”

Paul’s companions witnessed something extraordinary.

But the revelation was directed personally to Paul.

Cross References

Acts 9:7

Paul’s companions heard the sound associated with the encounter but did not see the One speaking.

Acts 26:13

The heavenly light also shone around Paul’s companions.

Daniel 10:7

Daniel’s companions sensed the effects of a supernatural revelation without sharing his full experience.

Important Note

Acts 9 says Paul’s companions heard a voice or sound.

Acts 22 says they did not understand the voice speaking to Paul.

The accounts are complementary:

They perceived the sound.

They did not comprehend the message given to Paul.

Spiritual Principle

Two people can stand near the same spiritual event while only one understands what God is communicating.

X. “WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”

Acts 22:10

“I asked, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ He said, ‘Get up and go into Damascus. There you will be told everything you are appointed to do.’”

Paul moves quickly from:

Who are You?

To:

What shall I do?

Cross References

Acts 9:6

Saul was instructed to enter Damascus where he would receive further direction.

Acts 26:16

Jesus later explains Paul's calling as a servant and witness.

Acts 9:15

God told Ananias that Saul was a chosen instrument for carrying Christ's name.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A genuine encounter with Christ moves from recognition to surrender.

XI. THE STRONG MAN MUST BE LED

Acts 22:11

"Since the brilliance of the light blinded me, my companions led me by the hand into Damascus."

The man who entered Damascus intending to arrest Christians now enters:

Blind.

Dependent.

Led by the hand.

Cross References

Acts 9:8

Saul rose from the ground unable to see and had to be led into Damascus.

Acts 9:9

He remained blind for three days.

2 Corinthians 12:7

Paul later learned that human weakness could keep him dependent upon God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God may humble the person He intends to use greatly.

XII. ANANIAS ENTERS PAUL'S STORY

Acts 22:12

“A man named Ananias, a devout follower of the law and respected by all the Jews living there.”

Paul emphasizes Ananias' respected Jewish character.

Cross References

Acts 9:10

Ananias was a disciple living in Damascus whom the Lord called in a vision.

Acts 9:17

Ananias obeyed and went to Saul despite knowing Saul's violent reputation.

Acts 9:13

Ananias initially expressed understandable fear concerning Saul.

Spiritual Principle

God often uses ordinary obedient believers at decisive moments in another person's calling.

XIII. “BROTHER SAUL”

Acts 22:13

“He came and stood beside me. He said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ At that moment, I could see again.”

The first Christian word Saul hears from Ananias is:

Brother.

Cross References

Acts 9:17

Ananias entered the house, laid hands on Saul, and called him “Brother Saul.”

Acts 9:18

Something like scales fell from Saul's eyes and he regained sight.

Acts 9:12

God had already revealed to Saul that Ananias would come to him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“Grace Can Call Yesterday’s Persecutor Today’s Brother.”

XIV. GOD CHOSE PAUL

Acts 22:14

“The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know His will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear His voice.”

Paul’s calling originates with God.

Cross References

Acts 9:15

Jesus told Ananias that Saul was His chosen instrument.

Acts 26:16

Jesus appointed Paul as a servant and witness.

1 Corinthians 9:1

Paul later appealed to having seen Jesus as part of his apostolic calling.

Spiritual Principle

Calling begins with God’s choice and purpose, not human ambition.

XV. PAUL WILL BECOME A WITNESS

Acts 22:15

“You will be His witness to all people of what you have seen and heard.”

The persecutor becomes:

A witness.

Cross References

Acts 1:8

Jesus commissioned His followers to become witnesses throughout the world.

Acts 26:16

Paul’s calling specifically involved witnessing to what Christ had revealed.

1 John 1:3

Apostolic witness centers upon declaring what was seen and heard concerning Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jesus does not merely save us from something; He also calls us to testify about Someone.

XVI. “GET UP AND BE BAPTIZED”

Acts 22:16

“What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”

This verse connects:

Baptism.

Cleansing.

Calling upon Christ.

Cross References

Acts 9:18

Saul regained his sight and was baptized.

Acts 2:38

Peter called hearers to repent and identify themselves with Jesus through baptism.

Romans 10:13

Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

Important Doctrinal Note

The New Testament consistently teaches that forgiveness is received through faith in Christ.

The phrase:

“Calling on His name”

is central here.

Baptism visibly expresses the believer’s identification with the cleansing and salvation found in Jesus.

The water itself is not presented as having magical power to remove sin.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Baptism publicly identifies the believer with the cleansing salvation received through Jesus Christ.

XVII. PAUL RETURNS TO JERUSALEM

Acts 22:17

“When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance.”

Paul emphasizes that he did not return to Jerusalem as an enemy of Jewish worship.

He was:

Praying in the temple.

Cross References

Acts 9:26

Saul returned to Jerusalem after his conversion and attempted to join the disciples.

Acts 10:10

Peter had also experienced a trance during a significant divine revelation.

2 Corinthians 12:2

Paul later referred to extraordinary visions and revelations from God.

Spiritual Principle

God can redirect a person in the very place where that person expected to serve.

XVIII. JESUS TELLS PAUL TO LEAVE JERUSALEM

Acts 22:18

“I saw the Lord saying to me, ‘Hurry! Leave Jerusalem immediately, for they will not accept your testimony about me.’”

Paul wanted Jerusalem to believe.

Jesus knew:

They would reject his testimony.

Cross References

Acts 9:29

Paul’s preaching in Jerusalem had quickly produced dangerous opposition.

Acts 9:30

Believers eventually helped Paul leave because of threats against his life.

Matthew 10:14

Jesus taught that there are times when persistent rejection requires moving elsewhere.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A rejected ministry assignment does not mean the servant has failed if God redirects him elsewhere.

XIX. PAUL ARGUES FROM HIS TESTIMONY

Acts 22:19

“I said, ‘Lord, they know I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you.’”

Paul thinks his conversion should be especially convincing.

He reasons:

They know what I was.

Surely they will believe what happened.

Cross References

Acts 8:3

Saul had violently persecuted believers.

Acts 9:1

He had been committed to threatening and destroying Christians.

Galatians 1:23

Believers later heard that the former persecutor was now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.

Spiritual Principle

A dramatic testimony can be powerful, but even the strongest testimony cannot force an unwilling heart to believe.

XX. PAUL REMEMBERS STEPHEN

Acts 22:20

“When the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving approval and guarding the clothes of those who killed him.”

Paul does not hide his darkest memory.

Cross References

Acts 7:58

Those who stoned Stephen placed their outer garments at Saul’s feet.

Acts 7:60

Stephen died praying that God would not hold the sin against his killers.

Acts 8:1

Saul approved Stephen’s execution.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“Grace Is Powerful Enough to Redeem a Person From a Past He Cannot Undo.”

Paul cannot resurrect Stephen.

But Christ can transform Paul.

XXI. SENT TO THE GENTILES

Acts 22:21

“But the Lord said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

This is the turning point.

Cross References

Acts 9:15

Paul had been chosen specifically to carry Jesus’ name to Gentiles, kings, and Israel.

Acts 13:2

The Holy Spirit later set Paul and Barnabas apart for missionary work.

Galatians 2:8

Paul recognized God's particular calling to ministry among the Gentiles.

Spiritual Principle

God's saving purpose is larger than ethnic, cultural, and national boundaries.

XXII. THE CROWD EXPLODES

Acts 22:22

"The crowd listened until he said this. Then they shouted, 'Away with such a man from the earth! He's not fit to live!'"

They listened until:

Gentiles.

That reveals the heart of the conflict.

Cross References

Acts 21:36

The crowd had already shouted, "Away with him!"

Luke 23:18

A hostile crowd had used similar words when rejecting Jesus.

Acts 25:24

Paul's opponents continued demanding severe punishment later.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Religious pride becomes exposed when grace is offered to people we believe do not deserve it.

XXIII. THE CROWD ERUPTS

Acts 22:23

"They shouted, threw off their cloaks, and flung dust into the air."

Reason disappears.

Emotion takes over.

Cross References

Acts 7:58

Stephen's attackers removed their outer clothing before stoning him.

Acts 14:19

Another crowd had previously turned violently against Paul.

Job 2:12

Throwing dust was sometimes associated with intense grief or emotional expression.

Spiritual Principle

When people refuse truth emotionally, volume often replaces reasoning.

XXIV. THE COMMANDER ORDERS FLOGGING

Acts 22:24

“The Roman commander ordered Paul taken into the fortress and examined by flogging, to find out why the crowd shouted against him.”

The commander wants information.

His method:

Torture.

Cross References

Acts 22:29

The commander will soon become alarmed when he realizes Paul is a Roman citizen.

Acts 21:34

The riot had prevented the commander from discovering the truth.

John 19:1

Jesus Himself had been flogged under Roman authority.

Spiritual Principle

Government power can be misused when speed replaces justice.

XXV. PAUL ASSERTS HIS LEGAL RIGHTS

Acts 22:25

“As they stretched him out to be flogged, Paul said to the centurion, ‘Is it lawful to scourge a Roman citizen who hasn’t been tried?’”

Paul does not simply submit to illegal punishment.

He asks a legal question.

Cross References

Acts 16:37

Paul had previously invoked Roman citizenship after unlawful treatment in Philippi.

Acts 25:16

Roman legal tradition recognized the right of an accused person to answer charges.

Acts 23:27

The commander later specifically mentions Paul's Roman citizenship.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Christian submission to authority does not require surrendering lawful protections against injustice.

XXVI. THE CENTURION WARNS THE COMMANDER

Acts 22:26

“When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and warned him, ‘Be careful! This man is a Roman.’”

Everything changes immediately.

Cross References

Acts 16:38

Authorities in Philippi had also become alarmed when they learned Paul was Roman.

Acts 22:29

The commander himself soon becomes afraid.

Acts 23:27

Paul's citizenship becomes an important fact in his ongoing legal protection.

Spiritual Principle

God can use ordinary legal status as an instrument of providence.

XXVII. “ARE YOU A ROMAN CITIZEN?”

Acts 22:27

“The commander came and asked, ‘Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?’ Paul said, ‘Yes.’”

Paul answers simply.

Cross References

Acts 16:37

Paul had previously publicly identified himself as a Roman citizen.

Acts 21:39

Paul also identified himself as a Jew from Tarsus.

Acts 22:3

Paul possessed both a strong Jewish identity and Roman citizenship.

Spiritual Principle

A believer may possess multiple earthly identities while maintaining ultimate allegiance to Christ.

XXVIII. PAUL WAS BORN A CITIZEN

Acts 22:28

“The commander replied, ‘I had to pay a large sum for my citizenship.’ Paul answered, ‘But I was born a citizen.’”

Paul’s citizenship carried considerable legal privilege.

Cross References

Acts 16:37

Paul had already used this legal status in Philippi.

Philippians 3:20

Paul also reminded believers that their ultimate citizenship is in heaven.

Acts 21:39

Paul’s earthly background included citizenship in an important city.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Earthly citizenship may be useful, but heavenly citizenship remains the believer’s highest identity.

XXIX. THE COMMANDER BECOMES ALARMED

Acts 22:29

“Those who were about to question him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed because he had bound a Roman citizen.”

Roman citizenship changes the legal situation.

Cross References

Acts 16:38

Roman officials had previously feared the consequences of unlawfully mistreating Paul.

Acts 22:25

Paul had challenged the legality of flogging an uncondemned Roman citizen.

Acts 25:16

Paul’s later proceedings also reflected Roman protections concerning accusation and defense.

Spiritual Principle

Human rulers themselves remain accountable to law.

XXX. PAUL IS BROUGHT BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

Acts 22:30

“The next day, wanting to know the exact charges against Paul, the commander released him and ordered the chief priests and the whole council to assemble. He brought Paul and set him before them.”

Paul is moving from:

Mob violence.

To legal examination.

Cross References

Acts 23:28

The commander later explains that he brought Paul before the Jewish council to discover the charges.

Acts 22:24

The commander had originally tried to learn why the crowd opposed Paul.

Acts 21:33

Paul had been arrested and bound during the riot.

Spiritual Principle

God can move His servant from an uncontrolled mob into a setting where the truth can be spoken more clearly.

XXXI. THE POWER OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Paul does not begin with abstract argument.

He says:

This is who I was.

This is what happened.

This is what Jesus did.

This is what He called me to do.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“A Testimony Is Powerful Because It Connects the Truth of Christ With the Evidence of a Changed Life.”

But testimony must remain centered upon:

Jesus.

Not merely:

Personal experience.

XXXII. THREE PARTS OF A STRONG CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

Paul's testimony gives us a useful pattern.

1. My Life Before Christ

Paul:

Persecuted believers.

2. How I Encountered Christ

Jesus confronted him.

3. How Christ Changed My Direction

Paul became a witness.

Spiritual Principle

A Christian testimony should ultimately explain what Jesus did rather than merely describe what we felt.

XXXIII. ZEAL IS NOT ENOUGH

Paul tells the crowd:

“I was as zealous for God as any of you are today.”

He knows their mindset.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Passion without truth can drive a person farther in the wrong direction.

Intensity is not the same as accuracy.

XXXIV. PAUL’S PAST DID NOT DISQUALIFY GOD’S FUTURE

Paul had:

Arrested Christians.

Beaten Christians.

Approved Stephen’s death.

Yet Jesus called him.

Spiritual Principle

No past is greater than Christ’s ability to save, forgive, and redirect a surrendered life.

XXXV. JESUS TOOK PAUL'S PERSECUTION PERSONALLY

Jesus said:

“Why are you persecuting Me?”

Not merely:

My church.

My followers.

My people.

But:

Me.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Christ identifies deeply with His people, so what touches the church matters to its Lord.

XXXVI. THE QUESTION AFTER CONVERSION

Paul asks:

“What shall I do, Lord?”

That should become every believer's posture.

Spiritual Principle

Saving faith is not merely asking Jesus to forgive the old life; it submits the new life to His direction.

XXXVII. GOD USES ANANIAS

Paul encountered Jesus directly.

Yet God still used:

Ananias.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Even extraordinary encounters with God do not eliminate the need for ordinary believers ministering faithfully to one another.

XXXVIII. “BROTHER SAUL”

Ananias knew Saul’s history.

Yet he called him:

Brother.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel creates a new family relationship stronger than a person’s former reputation.

XXXIX. CHOSEN TO BE A WITNESS

Paul was chosen:

To know.

To see.

To hear.

Then:

To testify.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Spiritual privilege carries spiritual responsibility.

If God gives us truth:

We should share truth.

XL. BAPTISM AND CALLING ON JESUS

Acts 22:16 connects baptism with:

Calling on His name.

Spiritual Principle

Christian baptism is an outward confession that a person now belongs to Jesus Christ.

It should never become:

An empty ritual.

A substitute for faith.

A magical act.

Its meaning rests in:

Christ.

Faith.

Identification with Him.

XLI. PAUL COULD NOT ERASE STEPHEN'S MEMORY

Paul carried the memory.

But Grace Did Not Leave Him There

He could not change yesterday.

He could serve Christ today.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

“You Cannot Rewrite Your Past, but Christ Can Rewrite the Direction of Your Future.”

XLII. YOUR TESTIMONY MAY NOT CONVINCE EVERYONE

Paul thought Jerusalem should understand.

They did not.

Spiritual Principle

The power of a testimony does not lie in guaranteeing conversion; it lies in faithfully bearing witness to Christ.

XLIII. THE GOSPEL DESTROYS SPIRITUAL SUPERIORITY

The crowd tolerates much until:

Gentiles.

Why?

Because grace crossed a boundary they wanted preserved.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Grace becomes offensive to pride when God gives the same mercy to people we consider outsiders.

XLIV. GOD'S SALVATION IS FOR ALL PEOPLE

Paul was sent:

Far away.

To Gentiles.

Spiritual Principle

No nation has exclusive ownership of God's saving grace.

The gospel is for:

Jew.

Gentile.

Every people.

Every nation.

XLV. WHEN TRUTH TRIGGERS ANGER

The crowd's emotional reaction does not prove Paul is wrong.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

People sometimes become angriest at the part of truth that threatens their deepest pride.

XLVI. PAUL USES HIS RIGHTS WITHOUT ABANDONING HIS MISSION

Paul says:

Is this lawful?

He does not consider legal protection unspiritual.

Spiritual Principle

Trusting God and using lawful means are not contradictions.

Paul trusted God.

Paul also used:

Roman citizenship.

Legal procedure.

Appeal.

XLVII. WHAT ACTS 22 TEACHES ABOUT CIVIL RIGHTS

Paul does not worship Roman citizenship.

But he uses it.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Earthly rights are tools, not idols.

Use them wisely.

But never make them greater than:

Christ.

Truth.

Mission.

XLVIII. GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN PAUL'S CITIZENSHIP

Paul did not become Roman that day.

He had been:

Born a citizen.

Long before Acts 22:

God already knew this moment would come.

Spiritual Principle

God may prepare resources for tomorrow's trial years before we know we will need them.

XLIX. THE CHAINS KEEP LEADING TO NEW AUDIENCES

Paul has already addressed:

The crowd.

Next:

The Sanhedrin.

Later:

Felix.

Festus.

Agrippa.

Eventually:

Rome.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

What looks like restriction may actually become God's transportation system into the next assignment.

L. TESTIMONY MUST POINT BEYOND SELF

Paul's testimony contains much autobiography.

But the center is:

Jesus.

Jesus Appeared

Jesus Spoke

Jesus Called

Jesus Sent

Spiritual Principle

A Christian testimony becomes weak when the person becomes the hero instead of Christ.

LI. THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF PAUL'S TESTIMONY

Paul's story says:

I was wrong.

Jesus was alive.

Jesus confronted me.

Jesus saved me.

Jesus called me.

Jesus sent me.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The heart of testimony is not "Look what I overcame," but "Look what Jesus did."

LII. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM ACTS 22

1. Share Your Testimony

Principle:

Your changed life can become a doorway for proclaiming Christ.

2. Religious Zeal Needs Truth

Principle:

Being passionate does not automatically mean being right.

3. Christ Can Save His Enemies

Principle:

Saul the persecutor became Paul the witness.

4. Salvation Leads to Obedience

Principle:

Paul immediately asked, “What shall I do, Lord?”

5. The Gospel Is for All Nations

Principle:

God sent Paul to Gentiles as well as Jews.

6. Testimony Does Not Guarantee Acceptance

Principle:

Paul faithfully testified even though the crowd rejected him.

7. Lawful Rights Can Serve God’s Purpose

Principle:

Paul’s Roman citizenship protected him from illegal flogging and kept his mission moving.

LIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

How did Paul begin his defense?

He addressed the crowd respectfully as:

“Brothers and fathers.”

He asked them to listen to his testimony.

Question 2

What was Paul's religious background?

He was a Jew from Tarsus, raised in Jerusalem, educated under Gamaliel, and intensely zealous for Jewish tradition.

Question 3

What had Paul done to Christians before his conversion?

He arrested believers, placed them in prison, persecuted the Way violently, and supported actions against Christians.

Question 4

What happened on the road to Damascus?

A brilliant light from heaven surrounded Paul.

He fell to the ground and heard Jesus ask:

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

Question 5

Who did Paul discover Jesus was?

Jesus identified Himself as:

“Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.”

Paul discovered that the Jesus he considered dead was alive and exalted.

Question 6

What did Paul ask Jesus?

He asked:

“What shall I do, Lord?”

This demonstrated surrender to Christ's authority.

Question 7

Who was Ananias?

Ananias was a respected, devout believer whom God used to restore Paul's sight and explain his calling.

Question 8

What was Paul called to do?

He was chosen to know God's will, see the Righteous One, hear His voice, and become His witness to all people.

Question 9

Why did the crowd become enraged?

They reacted violently when Paul said God had sent him to the Gentiles.

Their response exposed deep resistance to the idea that God's saving grace would extend freely beyond their own ethnic boundaries.

Question 10

What did Paul do when the Romans prepared to flog him?

He calmly invoked his rights as a Roman citizen and asked whether it was lawful to scourge an uncondemned citizen.

Question 11

How did the commander respond?

He became alarmed and immediately stopped the unlawful examination.

Question 12

What is the central lesson of Acts 22?

Jesus can transform even His fiercest enemies into faithful witnesses, and believers should testify boldly to His grace while using every lawful opportunity God provides to continue the mission.

LIV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Acts 22 asks us several important questions.

Can I Clearly Explain My Testimony?

Paul could.

Am I Trusting Religious Zeal Instead of Christ?

Paul once did.

Have I Honestly Faced My Past?

Paul did.

Do I Believe Christ Can Transform Anyone?

Paul's life proves that He can.

Have I Asked:

“What shall I do, Lord?”

Am I Willing to Be a Witness?

Paul was.

Have I publicly identified with Jesus?

Paul was baptized.

Do I believe the gospel belongs to people unlike me?

Paul was sent to Gentiles.

Do I become angry when God's grace crosses my preferred boundaries?

The crowd did.

Can I use lawful rights without placing my ultimate trust in them?

Paul did.

Does my testimony make Jesus the hero?

It should.

LV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Never Assume Someone Is Too Far Gone for Jesus”

Saul was not merely indifferent.

He actively tried to destroy Christianity.

Then:

Jesus met him.

Principle

The person fighting Christ today may become the person preaching Christ tomorrow.

LVI. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Your Testimony Should Have Jesus at the Center”

Paul talks about his past.

But the turning point is:

Jesus.

Principle

A testimony is not primarily the story of how strong you became; it is the story of how gracious Christ was.

LVII. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Do Not Let Your Past Become Stronger Than God’s Grace”

Paul had memories he could not erase.

Stephen’s death.

Believers imprisoned.

Homes invaded.

Yet:

Grace called him.

Principle

Your past may explain where you have been, but it does not have the authority to overrule what Christ can make you become.

LVIII. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Grace Is Most Offensive to Pride When It Reaches the Outsider”

The crowd listened until:

Gentiles.

Principle

If we celebrate grace only when it reaches people like us, we have not fully understood grace.

LIX. ANOTHER CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Use Every Tool God Gives You Without Making the Tool Your God”

Paul used:

His testimony.

His language.

His Jewish background.

His education.

His Roman citizenship.

Principle

Every ability, background, privilege, and legal protection can become a tool for gospel mission when surrendered to Christ.

LX. FINAL APPLICATION

Acts Chapter 22 is Paul’s story.

But more importantly:

It is Christ’s story through Paul.

Paul begins:

Religious.

Educated.

Zealous.

Confident.

Wrong.

He was not searching for Christianity.

He was traveling to arrest Christians.

Then:

Jesus stopped him.

That is grace.

Paul's life reminds us that:

Sincerity is not salvation.

Religion is not salvation.

Education is not salvation.

Zeal is not salvation.

Tradition is not salvation.

A person can possess all of those things and still oppose Jesus Christ.

Paul had to encounter:

Jesus.

Then comes one of the most important questions in the chapter:

“What shall I do, Lord?”

That is the language of surrender.

Paul's old life had said:

I know what must be done.

His new life says:

Lord, tell me what to do.

Then God sends Ananias.

A man who had every human reason to fear Saul calls him:

“Brother Saul.”

That is the gospel.

A persecutor becomes family.

An enemy becomes a brother.

A destroyer of churches becomes a builder of churches.

A man who approved Stephen's death becomes a man willing to die for the same Jesus Stephen died proclaiming.

That is transforming grace.

Paul then tells the crowd:

God sent me to the Gentiles.

And that becomes too much for them.

Their anger exposes something deeper than theology.

Pride.

Prejudice.

Spiritual exclusiveness.

They could not tolerate the thought that God might offer His grace freely to outsiders.

Acts 22 therefore warns us:

Never try to place fences around grace that God did not build.

Then:

Paul is taken into Roman custody.

The commander prepares to flog him.

Paul asks one question:

"Is it lawful?"

Immediately everything changes.

His Roman citizenship becomes protection.

This teaches us that spiritual dependence upon God does not require passivity toward injustice.

Paul could:

Trust God.

And:

Use lawful rights.

Both were true.

Acts 22 therefore calls us to:

Tell the truth about our past.

Tell the truth about Jesus.

Tell the truth about grace.

Tell the truth about our calling.

Never trust zeal without Scripture.

Never write off someone Christ can save.

Never make ourselves the hero of our testimony.

Never limit God's grace to our own group.

Use every lawful opportunity wisely.

And above all:

When Jesus confronts us:

Respond.

When Jesus calls us:

Obey.

When Jesus sends us:

Go.

And when people ask what happened to us:

Tell them about:

Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Acts Chapter 22.

Thank You for the testimony of Paul.

Thank You that Your grace can reach people who seem completely opposed to You.

Help us never decide that someone is beyond salvation.

Thank You that Jesus can turn enemies into servants.

Persecutors into witnesses.

Rebels into disciples.

Help us examine our own lives.

Keep us from trusting:

Religion.

Tradition.

Education.

Zeal.

Human goodness.

Help us trust:

Jesus Christ.

Give us hearts that ask:

“What shall I do, Lord?”

Teach us obedience.

Give us courage to tell our testimony.

Help us speak honestly about where we were.

But never let us glorify sin.

Let Jesus remain the center.

Thank You for faithful servants like Ananias.

Help us welcome those You have transformed.

Help us believe that people can change by Your grace.

Thank You for baptism and the public confession that we belong to Christ.

Help us live consistently with that confession.

Remove prejudice from our hearts.

Keep us from resenting Your grace when it reaches people unlike us.

Give us a gospel vision for:

Every nation.

Every race.

Every people.

Every person.

Thank You for the earthly tools You provide.

Give us wisdom to use them.

Legal rights.

Education.

Language.

Citizenship.

Experience.

Resources.

Let every advantage become a servant of the gospel.

And when opposition comes:

Keep us faithful.

When people reject our testimony:

Keep us loving.

When doors open:

Help us speak.

May our lives always declare:

Jesus Christ saved me, changed me, called me, and sent me.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“He said, ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know His will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear His voice. You will be His witness to all people of what you have seen and heard.’” — Acts 22:14–15

Central Truth

Jesus Christ can transform the most zealous opponent into a faithful witness, calling sinners from religious blindness into saving faith, obedience, public testimony, and worldwide mission while sovereignly using even earthly circumstances and legal rights to preserve His servants.

Acts 22 in One Sentence

Paul stands before the hostile Jerusalem crowd and recounts his former zeal in persecuting Christians, his dramatic encounter with the risen Jesus on the Damascus road, his calling through Ananias to become Christ's witness to all people, his commission to the Gentiles, and his providential protection from unlawful flogging through his Roman citizenship.