

THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

PAUL ADDRESSED A MOB, ACTS 21:37-22:21

- A. Paul obtains permission to speak to the mob (21:37-40)
1. He asked permission to speak to the tribune (37-38), *As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek? Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?"*
 - a. Paul spoke to the tribune who was surprised he spoke Greek.
 - b. The tribune thought Paul was an Egyptian who had led a revolt three years earlier.
 - 1) He claimed to be a prophet of God and declared that the wall of Jerusalem would collapse at his command.
 - 2) He said he would lead his followers from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem and would defeat the Romans.
 - 3) The Romans attacked his group, killing many of them, but he had escaped.
 - c. The Assassins were a group of radicals who carried daggers under their cloaks and stabbed Romans and pro-Roman Jews in an attempt to gain independence from Rome.
 2. He explained that he was a Jew as well as a citizen of a Roman city (39-40), *Paul replied, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people." And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying:*
 - a. Paul stated that he was a Jew who was from Tarsus in Cilicia.
 - 1) He was a Jew so he had a right to be in the temple court of Israel.
 - 2) He was not a resident of Egypt but from Tarsus, one of the three chief centers of learning in the ancient world (Athens, Alexandria and Tarsus).
 - b. Paul asked permission to speak to the crowd which was granted.
 - 1) Based on his response, the tribune gave Paul permission to speak.
 - 2) As always, Paul chose to speak to the unruly crowd instead of get to safety.
 - c. The crowd quieted down as Paul motioned to speak to them.
 - 1) They were probably amazed that he was given permission to speak.
 - 2) Paul spoke in the *Hebrew dialect*, probably Aramaic which was the common language of Palestinian Jews.
 - 3) Many who joined the disturbance did not know who Paul was or of what he was being accused.
- B. Paul's defense to the mob (22:1-21)
1. He addressed them (1-2), *"Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you." And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said:*
 - a. The mob quieted down when they heard him speak in Aramaic.
 - b. He addressed the crowd respectfully like Stephen, Acts 7:2, *And Stephen said: Brothers and fathers, hear me.*
 - c. Paul's defense was against the false charges noted in Acts 21:28, *...This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.*
 - d. R. B. Rackham, *The real crime of Paul was preaching to the Gentiles, and the real heresy his gospel of equality...*
 2. He introduced himself (3-21)
 - a. His Jewish background (3), *I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.*
 - 1) Paul was a Jew raised in the Dispersion and attempted to overcome the prejudice of Palestinian Jews by showing he was trained in Jerusalem under the instruction of Gamaliel, the most respected teacher of the day.
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Paul's point in citing his background was to show his hearers that he was as zealous for his Jewish heritage as any of them.*
 - 3) Kenneth Gangel, *As today, one's credentials do not constitute the message, but they may secure a hearing.*

- b. His persecution of Christianity (4-5), *I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.*
- 1) Paul recounted his persecution of the Way, a means of identifying Christianity not as a new religion but the proper path of Judaism. Pohill, *In their own manner the Roman officials attested to this concept, maintaining that the whole dispute between Paul and the Jews was a theological difference within their own religion.*
 - 2) He was authorized by the High Priest and the Sanhedrin to imprison and even put to death those who followed the Way.
 - 3) He told of his trip to Damascus for the purpose of arresting followers of the Way and bringing them back to Jerusalem for punishment.
 - 4) The zeal of the mob did not compare to the zeal Paul had for the law and the temple.
- c. His conversion to Christianity (6-16)
- 1) Jesus appeared to Paul (6-9), *As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting 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 did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me.*
 - a) Paul gave his account of his travel to Damascus which was interrupted by a supernatural event.
 - b) He explained that Jesus of Nazareth made Himself visible to Paul in such a way that the brightness of His light outshone the noonday sun.
 - c) The revelation was specifically for Paul and not those traveling with him.
 - d) This was a supernatural revelation not sought by Paul but initiated by God; therefore, Paul's change of perspective was in response to the will of God.
 - 2) Paul was blinded (10-11), *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 since 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.*
 - a) Paul was a good Jew who wanted to obey divine revelation.
 - b) He was told to continue on to Damascus where he would be informed what he should do.
 - c) He had been blinded by the light of Jesus so he had to be led into Damascus.
 - d) Paul's use of *Lord* to address Jesus does not necessarily mean he had submitted to Jesus as Messiah but it was definitely a sign of respect which would take him to that place.
 - 3) Ananias restored Paul's sight (12-13), *And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him.*
 - a) Paul made it clear that another devout Jew was sent by Jesus to minister to him.
 - b) His sight was restored at the command of Ananias, a Jew respected by the Jewish community.
 - c) Thomas Constable, *Paul sought to impress his hearers with the fact that a pious Jew had communicated God's mission to him.*
 - 4) Ananias told Paul of his future established by God (14-15), *And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard.*
 - a) Ananias confirmed that it was the God of their fathers who was making known His will to Paul.
 - b) Jesus is described as the Righteous One Who spoke to Paul who can be authenticated as an apostle due to Jesus' appearance to him, 1 Corinthians 9:1, *...Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?*
 - c) Paul's purpose in life would be a witness of Jesus to everyone which is broader than what the crowd supposed until Paul made it clear in verse 21.

- 5) Paul was baptized (16), *And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.*
- The calling on the name of Jesus, faith in Him is the cleansing agent, not the baptism.
 - Baptism is an outward act confirming an inward reality, 1 Corinthians 6:11, *And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*
 - calling on* is a past participle which means *having called on*. Paul was saved before his water baptism.
- d. His calling as an apostle to the Gentiles (17-21)
- He was told to leave Jerusalem because his testimony would not be accepted (17-18), *When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance and saw him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.'*
 - Paul related how God (Jesus) confirmed his calling while he was praying in the temple.
 - This took place three years after his conversion, Galatians 1:18-19, *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.*
 - God warned Paul to leave Jerusalem because his testimony concerning Jesus would not be received by Jews as well as many Christians.
 - He noted his abuse of Jews who had come to faith (19-20), *And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.'*
 - Paul believed that his former persecution of Christians should prove to Jews that his change came from God.
 - He was unable to see what a radical move He made in the eyes of unbelieving Jews.
 - Kenneth Gangel, *Since Paul had been commissioned as a witness for the Lord, why wouldn't Jerusalem be the perfect place to do that? Here people knew his reputation as a rabbi and his role in the martyrdom of Stephen. Here they would remember his persecution of Christians and, having seen his complete about-face, would surely pay attention to his description of an encounter with Jesus Christ.*
 - The Lord told Paul that he would represent Jesus to the Gentiles (21), *And he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'*
 - Jesus' interaction with Paul ended with a command, *Go*.
 - The Lord directed Paul to go to Gentiles who were far away.
 - The crowd responded with rage when they heard the message of Messiah was to be taken to Gentiles.

CONCLUSION

- Paul never missed an opportunity to declare Christ regardless of the danger.
- Paul tailored his message to the audience without changing the message.
- Paul did not fully understand his calling until Jesus made it very clear three years after his conversion.