

TITLE: The Gospel Defense
Acts 22: 1-22 CSB

SERMON SCRIPTURE

“Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense before you.” When they heard that he was addressing them in Aramaic, they became even quieter. He continued, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the law of our ancestors. I was zealous for God, just as all of you are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, arresting and putting both men and women in jail, as both the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. After I received letters from them to the brothers, I traveled to Damascus to arrest those who were there and bring them to Jerusalem to be punished.

As I was traveling and approaching Damascus, about noon an intense light from heaven suddenly flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, the one 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. I said, ‘What should I do, Lord?’ The Lord told me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything that you have been assigned to do.’ Since I couldn’t see because of the brightness of the light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and went into Damascus. Someone named Ananias, a devout man according to the law, who had a good reputation with all the Jews living there, came and stood by me and said, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight.’ And in that very hour I looked up and saw him. And he said, ‘The God of our ancestors has appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the words from his mouth, since you will be a witness for him to all people of what you have seen and heard. And now, why are you delaying? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’

After I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance and saw him telling me, ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ But I said, ‘Lord, they know that in synagogue after synagogue I had those who believed in you imprisoned and beaten. And when the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed, I stood there giving approval and guarding the clothes of those who killed him.’ He said to me, ‘Go, because I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’

They listened to him up to this point. Then they raised their voices, shouting, *“Wipe this man off the face of the earth! He should not be allowed to live!”*

Acts 22:1-22 (CSB)

GROUP DISCUSSION

1) Read the text (Acts 22:1-22) and ask questions of the text:

- a) What stands out to me
- b) What questions would I ask
- c) What can I personally, or our group apply this week
- d) Where do I see Jesus

2) Do I struggle with defending myself to others? (actions, words, motives, heart)

3) How does the Gospel call out my self-defending nature?

4) Would it have been wrong for Paul to defend his actions to the people?

- If not, why didn't he?

5) If the Gospel has taken root in my own heart, how can I take one step this week towards becoming less defensive of my past and more intentional about the Gospel being on display in my life for others to see?

Prayer and Praise