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Gerry Andersen

## **Paul Appeals to a Centurion Acts 22:22-29**

Acts 21:18 began the final section of Acts where Paul was brought to Rome as a witness for Jesus Christ. After being seized by Jews in Jerusalem, Acts 22 records Paul's address to a mob as he recounts his conversion about thirty years earlier.

### **1. The response of the Jewish crowd (22:22-23)**

Paul was suddenly interrupted by the mob after Paul declared that it was God who sent him to minister to the Gentiles. The Jews could not accept that God would use one of their own to invite the Gentiles into their divine blessing.

The Jews had been sent to the Gentiles before (Jonah, cf. Matthew 23:15), but the Gentiles had to come to God through Judaism. That Gentiles were considered acceptable to God caused the Jews to be beside themselves with anger, as expressed by the throwing of their cloaks and the tossing of the dust into the air.

### **2. The response of the Roman centurion (22:24-25)**

The primary responsibility of the commander was to keep the peace in Jerusalem, and the uprising of the Jews against Paul required taking Paul back to the Antonia Fortress and away from the mob.

It is unlikely that the commander understood the Hebrew dialect (22:2) so he was confused about the reaction of the crowd. Since there was no reason for Paul to hide the reason for the Jews' reaction, the commander likely did not believe Paul.

The centurion assigned to Paul had stretched him out to be scourged, and the flogging was not for the purpose of punishment but rather it was the most common method the Romans used for finding out information.

### **3. The response of the Roman commander (22:26-29)**

Paul's citizenship was so unexpected that the commander was shocked to learn of it ("you" in v. 27 is emphatic). This citizenship would have been recorded on a registry in both Rome and in his hometown of Tarsus and a wooden tablet of verification would be provided. Beyond this, there would be other citizens who could vouch for fellow citizens. To misrepresent yourself as a citizen of Rome was punishable by death so the commander accepted Paul's claim without investigation. Interestingly, Paul did not appeal to his citizenship when he was beaten in Philippi (Acts 16:22-40), most likely due to his ministry to his fellow prisoners.

There was no official system for purchasing citizenship in the Roman Empire. This is an admission that the commander gained citizenship through the common illicit means of bribery. From Acts 23:26, we learn that his citizenship was gained a few years earlier as he took the customary name of the Emperor upon gaining citizenship, Claudius (41-54 AD), who greatly expanded citizenship in Rome.

Paul's being born a citizen spoke to the favorable status his family had received through some acts of support for the Romans. This status afforded him the benefit of being exempt from torture or being chained without a trial (cf. 21:33). God's sovereign work in Paul's life began long before his conversion.

God selected and prepared the right man for the mission. Paul, as both a devout Jew and a Roman citizen, was able to minister to both the Jewish and Gentile world for Christ. God has prepared each of us for the work that He desires us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Paul was so violently opposed by his own people that he needed to be protected by a Roman commander. People can be so attached to their own perspectives that they blindly miss the truth that God has revealed to them.

It is God's will that people are reached with the Gospel, and holding to traditions of men must not interfere with our mission.

