

# OpenTheo

## Acts 22:22 - 24:27



### Acts - Steve Gregg

In "Acts 22:22 - 24:27," Steve Gregg recounts the story of Paul's conversion and subsequent mistreatment for his faith in Christ. Despite being a Roman citizen, Paul still endured severe beatings and accusations from the Jewish council, who falsely accused him of breaking temple laws. Through it all, Paul remained steadfast in his Christian beliefs and ultimately appealed to Caesar after being bound in Caesarea for two years. The corrupt nature of the Jewish religious leadership is highlighted, as they were willing to lie and even conspire to assassinate Paul.

### Transcript

As you know, we ended our last session in the midst of chapter 22 of Acts, and the stopping point was the end of Paul's address to the mob in Jerusalem. He had been innocent of any provocation, but Jews from Asia had mistakenly or dishonestly claimed that he had violated the temple, bringing a Gentile into the precincts beyond the point where Gentiles were allowed to go. Paul did not do this.

He would not do this, but he was accused of it, and before anyone decided to give him a fair trial, the whole of the worshipping crowd at the temple decided he was the culprit. They began to beat him and try to kill him. As is so often the case, the Romans are the good guys in the book of Acts.

The Romans come to intervene. This tribune, Claudius Lysias, brings down some soldiers from the fortress and rescues Paul from them. As they're ascending the steps to the barracks, Paul asks him for permission to speak to the group, which is granted.

At the beginning of chapter 22, Paul gives this speech that ended in verse 21. The speech was largely a recounting of his own life and conversion. When you think about it, if you had that kind of testimony, that would be what you'd use most of the time.

Imagine being able to stand before an unconverted audience, unbelievers, and testify that you were a notorious persecutor of the Christian church and were going about that very business when a vision from heaven blinded you, literally blinded you, supernaturally for three days. And then you were supernaturally restored your vision

when you got baptized. What a great testimony to give in an evangelistic situation.

In fact, there have been some scholars that said the testimony of Paul is all that is necessary to prove Christianity to be true. Of all the other apologetic arguments available to prove that Jesus is who he said he was, you don't need any of them if you have the testimony of Paul. It is truly the case, I think, that Paul's testimony is one of the strongest proofs of Christianity because he is a known historical character.

While some people foolishly claim that Jesus is a mere myth, no one has ever claimed that Paul is a myth. We have letters that are written by him. He's the founder of a whole bunch of churches, some of which still exist today.

I mean, let's face it, to say he's a myth is a ridiculous claim. But his story, everyone has the same story about him. He was a Jew persecuting the church.

Something changed him. What was it? No one can deny that something changed him. Now, people can come up with different theories about why he changed without agreeing that he saw Jesus.

Some people have said maybe he's epileptic and had a seizure and mistakenly took it for a vision from Christ or something like that. But none of the alternative stories satisfy the evidence, just like none of the alternative stories to the resurrection of Christ satisfy the evidence of the empty tomb and the visible sightings of Christ after his resurrection. In every case, the known facts can only really well be explained one way.

And Paul's conversion is certainly one of those things that's stunning proof. And Paul gives that testimony every time he can to the Jews. And he did.

And they listened intently. It says in verse 22, they listened to him until this word. What word? The word Gentiles.

The last word of his sermon. It may not have been his intention that this would be the last word of his sermon, but the last word he was able to get out before the crowd interrupted him was Gentiles. He said he saw a vision of Jesus while he was praying in the temple.

And Jesus said, I'm sending you to the Gentiles. Now, this is suggesting, of course, that Jesus choosing a primary emissary was not going to send him to the Jews, but to the Gentiles. Jesus was in that sense favoring the Gentiles over the Jews in privileging them with the message that Paul was going to preach them.

And this, again, only confirmed in the minds of those who already hated Paul that he was a Gentile lover. He was a turncoat. He was mishumid.

Mishumid, the Jewish word for a traitor. And that's how modern Jews think of Saul. They

know his story.

But they think they would call him mishumid. He's a traitor to the Jewish people. And, of course, he was not.

But and he did nothing that he wasn't compelled to do. How could he have responded differently? He didn't ask to become a Christian. He didn't ask to be an apostle.

He was on an entirely different trajectory by his own choice. And Jesus apprehended him, as Paul says it in Philippians. He says, Christ apprehended me.

And it's like Christ arrested him and made him go another way. Now, Paul could have said no, but how could you? I mean, how could you really say no to that? So poor Paul, in a sense, I mean, fortunate Paul, too. He had a great privilege of revelations and miracles being done by him in planting churches.

What a wonder what rewards he has in heaven. But at the same time, all the trouble that they gave him had nothing to do with any choice he had in the matter. In every case, he's just doing what he was, in a sense, told to do by a divine vision, though he's only quoting what Jesus said to him.

I'm sending you to the Gentiles. That was an intolerable statement to his already somewhat agitated Jewish audience there. Now, this is just throwing a hissy fit, really.

I mean, dust. The Jews typically would shake the dust off their clothes or stamp the dust off their feet as an act of renouncing or disclaiming any association with somebody. The Jews did that when they would come from a Gentile land.

They come back in Israel, they shake the Gentile dust off their clothes and off their feet. Paul himself did this with a couple of places, Antioch, the synagogue, and there's another time later on where the Jews reject Paul and he shakes his dust off his feet or off his clothes. Here they're turning their clothes off and throwing dust in the air.

It's like that's not the ritual. That's not the normal thing to do. They're just acting like a bunch of brats, throwing a fit.

And he's not fit to live away with him from the earth, they say. And the commander, that is, the tribune who had rescued him, ordered him to be brought into the barracks and said that he should be examined under scourging so that he might know why they shouted so against him. The tribune apparently didn't know Aramaic well enough to even know what's being discussed here.

He's just heard Paul talking in some foreign language. All of a sudden the people just blow up. And the Roman has no idea what's going on.

So he's like, okay, interrogate him. Now, the typical way to interrogate a prisoner was to

scourge them. That would mean you'd tie them to a whipping post and you'd whip them until they gave information.

That's how they interrogated people, to get information. And if a person was not giving, was not readily giving information that was useful, they'd whip them harder all the time. The lashes would get more severe with every successive lash necessary to get them to confess what's going on.

So this is how you get a confession out of a person. This is how you get information out of them. Now, Claudius Lysias, he had asked for information from the Jews, but he couldn't get a straight answer.

So he figured, I'm going to get it straight from the horse's mouth, interrogate him, scourge him. Scourge means to whip. And as they bound him with thongs to the whipping post, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned? Now, not only was it not lawful to scourge a man who is a Roman and not condemned in court, it was wrong to bind him.

One of the rights of Roman citizens is that until they had been condemned in court of a crime, which Paul had not been, you could not bind him or whip him. And they had already bound him and they were preparing to whip him. Now, this word, Paul seems to say it so casually.

I mean, Paul knew that he was in the bargaining position. He didn't have to be angry. He didn't have to be adamant.

He could just say, by the way, is it lawful? Just check it. I haven't read the law codes recently, but maybe you know, is it lawful for you to scourge a man who's a Roman, uncondemned? And suddenly it strikes fear, not only into the centurion, but into the tribune too, because they've already bound him. That's illegal.

They haven't yet scourged him, but they've already violated his rights. And if he wanted to press charges, it could go very badly for them, for their careers. And so when the centurion heard that, he went and told the tribune, the commander saying, take care what you do for this man is a Roman.

Then the commander came and said to him, tell me, are you a Roman? And Paul said, yes. And the commander answered, with a large sum, I obtained this citizenship. And Paul said, but I was a born citizen.

Now, you could buy citizenship, it'd be very expensive, because the privileges were considered to be very worthwhile. And apparently this tribune had Roman citizenship himself and had purchased it at some considerable cost to himself. Paul didn't have to pay a penny.

He was born with that privilege, which means that his father or grandfather had obtained it for his family. Now, as I said earlier, citizenship was not easily granted to people. Most people in the Roman Empire didn't have that privilege.

That's why it was not assumed that he was a Roman citizen until he claimed it. It was assumed he was not. It'd be the rare person, especially the rare Jew, that was a Roman citizen.

And yet Paul tells us elsewhere that he was the son of a Pharisee. Yet his father, a Pharisee, had Roman citizenship. The two ways to get it would be largely by doing a huge favor for the emperor, usually some tremendous exploit on behalf of Rome in war.

Though Pharisees probably wouldn't be great warriors in general and probably not very much, probably not great, shall we say, patriots of Rome. And so his father probably was very rich. And knowing the benefits of Roman citizenship, had probably purchased it.

Just like this tribune had purchased it at great price. The difference is that Paul's dad had done so, so Paul didn't need to. And Paul was a free-born Roman citizen.

And what a privilege that was to him at no cost that he had these benefits. And I'm sure he appreciated it, especially at this particular moment. Thanks, dad, you know, wherever you are, thank you for buying citizenship for me because it's getting me out of another flogging.

And it's so interesting that when he was in Philippi back in chapter 16, of course, he was a Roman citizen then too, but he let them flog him without telling them that he was a citizen. And he took a beating that he could have easily avoided simply by mentioning it, but he took that beating. He's taking one for the team because really he had been arrested.

He knew that by letting them beat him, he could hold that against them later. And he did the next day when they wanted to release him. He said, wait a minute, I'm not leaving without you publicly exonerating me because I'm a Roman.

You didn't know that when you beat me, did you? But you know it now. And so he really has them over a barrel. In this case, he decided not to play that game.

He just wanted to not get beaten. You know, I guess Paul bore in his bodies the marks of Christ from all his beatings. If you read 2 Corinthians, which is talking about things Paul had suffered previous to this time, because when he wrote 2 Corinthians, it was before this time.

And he catalogs a lot of the beatings he had taken. Apparently a lot of times he didn't claim his Roman citizenship or else it was violated by the authorities. But in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, I guess there are 11.

2 Corinthians 11, 23, Paul says, are they administrators of Christ? He's talking about false teachers in the church. I speak as a fool, I am more. In labors more abundant, in stripes, which are from floggings, above measure.

He couldn't even count the lashes he'd had. It's beyond measurement how many stripes I've got on my back. I would imagine you'd keep track as long as you could, you know, but eventually you just lose count, you know.

In prisons more frequently, in deaths often, from the Jews, five times I received 40 stripes minus one. Now he got 39 lashes five times from the Jews. Now the Jews were not Romans and therefore they may have paid no attention to his Roman citizenship.

They were probably, when they did this, we don't know. We have actually no record of this happening. And yet it was all during the time that we've already read about in his life.

Somewhere in there, these five occasions of getting 39 lashes each time, that's almost 200 lashes right there. And he says, three times I was beaten with rods. Now this may not have been by the Romans either.

The Romans didn't usually use rods. This could have been just the pagan crowds, the same kind who stoned him in Lystra. There may have been crowds in some places who beat him with rods.

But in any case, he had a lot of stripes. Once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked. Three times he was shipwrecked and the one that is at the end of the Book of Acts had not happened yet.

So his shipwreck that is recorded at the end of the Book of Acts was the fourth time. It was dangerous sailing in those days. He did a lot of sailing, but four different times his ship wrecked.

The chances didn't seem very good for making it to your destination by ship in those days. A good chance you'd have a wreck. But this is how much Paul had suffered, including beatings, lots of beatings.

At this point, I think he felt like, I've had enough, I think. I'm ready to kind of forego this one. I'm a Roman citizen.

You can't beat me. He just made that executive decision. I'm not going to get beaten this time.

Thanks. And so the commander said, well, I paid a lot for my citizenship. Paul says, I was born with it.

Verse 29, then immediately those who were about to examine him, that is those who are

about to scourge him, to interrogate him, withdrew from him. Probably very nervously. And the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman because he had bound him.

See, he had already violated his Roman citizenship. Now he needed to be very conciliatory to Paul because it was in Paul's power to press charges for this. And so we see the Tribune now is going to be very friendly to Paul.

Of course, he'd been pretty good to Paul already. I mean, for him to allow the prisoner at the prisoner's request to address the crowd, that's something the Tribune didn't have to do. I mean, again, the Romans are seen as fairly reasonable people and even sympathetic people, as opposed to the Jews.

That's how Luke portrays things. The Romans are pretty good people. The Jews are pretty unreasonable and violent people.

That's the picture we get in these stories of Paul. The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear and brought Paul down and set him before him. Now, he released him from his bonds.

Sounds like he kept him bound even though he was afraid having bound him. He may have thought, well, I've already done it. If Paul's going to press charges, I guess it's no worse leaving bound for another day.

It may be that he's trying to make Paul feel like Lysias is still somewhat in control of the situation. So I'm going to keep you bound for one more day or overnight. Or maybe bound means imprisoned.

It's possible that the word bound just means in prison. So it was not illegal to keep him in prison while they waited for his case. So maybe he unbound him or may simply mean he let him out of jail.

And he brought him down and set him before the Jewish council. That would be a gathering of the Sanhedrin. At least a quorum, if not the whole Sanhedrin would be meeting.

And he says because he wanted to find out for sure what the charges were. Now, it would seem that he could have just asked Paul, what are they charging you with? Why are they angry at you? Why are you here? And Paul would have said, well, they don't like me. They're charging me with doing something I didn't do in the temple.

But they're doing it not because of anything I did, but because they've got a longstanding grudge against me for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. I mean, Paul could have told them the truth and none of that would make any sense to the Roman

mind. So even if Paul had tried to explain to him what was going on, the tribune still felt he doesn't quite get it.

And it is kind of hard to get. Because first of all, Paul hadn't done any crime and yet he remains in prison for four years. And both Felix and Festus and Agrippa, all of them Roman authorities, hear his case and they can't find anything wrong with him, but they don't release him.

It's kind of interesting. You'd think they would release him since they, I mean, he does stand trial before them. But because it says to please the Jews, they left him in bonds.

So the Jews, as I say, were an unruly people. The Romans had trouble keeping them from, you know, exploding into violence. And Paul was such a powder keg, apparently, that even though the Romans decided he hadn't done anything wrong, they felt like, but if we let him go, the Jews are going to be making more trouble for us.

So it was easier just to keep him a prisoner. Which must have been very frustrating to Paul to know that there were no, first of all, no charges had been formally pressed against him. And his captors themselves knew he had done nothing wrong and yet they keep him in prison.

That's injustice. And when you suffer that kind of injustice, you'd probably be pretty upset. I would think.

Chapter 23, then Paul looking earnestly at the council. This is the Sanhedrin now gathered. And Lysias, Claudius Lysias has brought Paul before them to, so he could face his accusers.

And Claudius could then figure out what they are accusing him of. But Paul speaks first. Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council said, men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, God will strike you, you whitewashed wall. For you sit to judge me according to the law.

And do you command me to be struck contrary to the law? The law of Moses would not allow you to strike a prisoner when he hasn't been found guilty of anything. And so here's the high priest overseeing the proceedings, which are supposed to be a legal proceeding. And he breaks the Jewish law by commanding Paul to be struck.

And yet he's supposed to be judging Paul according to the law. Paul says you're a hypocrite. Now, those who stood by said, do you revile God's high priest? Then Paul said, I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest for it is written, you should not speak evil of the ruler of your people.



The quotation is from Exodus 22, verse 28. He said, oh, I wouldn't have done it if I knew he was the high priest. I know the law well enough that I shouldn't revile the ruler of my people.

And the question arises and is never answered very fully for us or acceptably. Why didn't Paul know that was a high priest? Now, it's true, it wasn't the same high priest who had sent him out years earlier. That had been Caiaphas.

But now there's another high priest that's come to come to sit there while Paul's been away. But the high priest would normally have his special robes on. It would easily be distinguished and sit in a special place.

So you would think that Paul would know that that was the high priest. Some people say, well, maybe Paul's eyesight being bad, you know, and maybe the priest was there in his civvies and not dressed up in his robes and things like that. Maybe he was in his casual clothes or something.

And so Paul didn't recognize him as the chief priest. Paul said, I didn't know it was the chief priest. I shouldn't truly speak badly of the ruler of my people.

He does back down and apologize. But most scholars who discuss this matter find it difficult to believe that Paul really didn't know that was a high priest. How could he be so ignorant of who the high priest was in Judaism? And so many people think that Paul's being sarcastic.

By saying, oh, I didn't know that such a person as a high priest could be such a jerk. Or more, I didn't know that such a jerk could be the high priest. I didn't know that a man who is so dismissive of justice and right behavior could be a high priest.

Some people think that that's what Paul's saying. I didn't know he could be a high priest. So he's kind of adding a further insult.

I mean, it's not. But he says, oh, but I, of course, I shouldn't do that because our law says not to speak evil of the ruler of your people. But on the other hand, Paul may have not recognized the high priest any longer as the ruler of God's people.

Since the high priest was a ruler in a different religion than Christianity. And therefore, Paul might have just been kind of playing with them a little bit. I paid the price by getting a blowout to get to have the fun.

For the price. Hard to know. We don't really know how Paul meant that.

If he's really humbling himself and saying, oh, I'm terribly sorry. I didn't know. I didn't know who you were.

But certainly, if the high priest gives a command and a soldier, say, strikes Paul, he'd

have to assume that the person giving the command must have been someone in authority or else why would it be obeyed? So, I mean, I personally lean toward the view that he's probably being sarcastic. But there's a possibility that for some reason, unexplained, that Paul was somehow not aware who the high priest was on that occasion. But when Paul perceived, okay, that little episode has passed.

Now, Paul scans the crowd and says, I see something here. The Sanhedrin is made up of some Pharisees and some Sadducees. Now, as a former Pharisee himself and a Palestinian, you know, having studied in Jerusalem, he knew very well how much tension there was between the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

Like I said, it's like our, you know, our Congress with the Democrats and Republicans. Very, very, it must be a very uncomfortable thing to be in Congress, no matter what side you're on. Because right now, there's huge tension between Republicans and Democrats, more than ever, almost hatred, you know.

And so with the Sadducees and Pharisees, they had this longstanding animosity. And it was based on the fact that the Pharisees believed some things that the Sadducees didn't believe. And because they didn't share the same beliefs, they despised each other and they had fought a lot.

So there's a lot of tension there. And it says, when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead, I am being judged. Now, there's an explanation in verse 8, for the Sadducees say there's no resurrection and no angel or spirit, but the Pharisees confess both.

This is the theological difference between those two groups. It's very volatile, very controversial, and which Paul is deliberately exploiting at this point. He's going to turn them against each other.

They're all against him at the moment. He's going to turn their focus against each other. And it says in verse 6, or verse 7, and when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided, for the Sadducees say there's no resurrection and no angel or spirit, but the Pharisees confess both.

Then there arose a loud outcry, and the scribes who were of the Pharisees party arose and protested, saying, we find no evil in this man, but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God. Now, this is entirely the Pharisees and the Sadducees fighting it out, and the Pharisees say, well, you know, maybe an angel appeared to him, maybe a spirit. And look, as you saw, Sadducees don't believe in angels and spirits, or resurrection.

Paul says, I'm a Pharisee, I'm here on trial because I believe in the resurrection. The

Pharisees say, oh, he's on our side, we don't fight against God, maybe an angel, and of course, they know they're even saying that. They're rubbing it in the faces, this difference they have with the Sadducees.

An angel or spirit might have spoken to him, and it only stirs things up worse. And when there arose great dissension, the commander, the Roman tribune, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them and bring him to the barracks. So he made one attempt to discover what the problem was by bringing Paul in among them, and actually, if they're speaking Aramaic, he still doesn't know what they're saying.

And every time Paul confronts these people, there ends up being a riot. There was a riot that called the Romans into the situation in the first place. Then Paul speaks on the steps of the fortress, and the riot follows that.

Now he's speaking in the hearing, before the Sanhedrin, a riot comes up because of that. This Roman leader, he must have really been perplexed. What is causing all of this emotion? What's causing all this strife? And so he took him back to the barracks, again under protective custody, because Paul was in danger of being pulled apart by these people.

But the following night, the Lord stood by him, verse 11. And so Jesus apparently came to Paul. Now this could have been a vision, or it could have been Jesus himself.

It says, the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer, Paul, for as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome. Now, Paul had a number of visions of Jesus. Of course, one of them was the occasion of his conversion.

He had a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus. We found in chapter 22, when he's giving his testimony, that when he was in Jerusalem praying, three years after his conversion, he saw Jesus in the temple. And Jesus spoke to him specific directions then.

Now he has a vision of Jesus again. Later on, when he's on the ship, he's going to have an angel come to him, not Jesus this time, and tell him, don't be afraid. The ship's going to be lost, but the people will be saved in a horrible storm where everyone's afraid.

Paul received these visions. I mean, just put yourself in this position. Suppose you actually had Jesus visit you.

And he came and said, you're doing good. Don't worry. Things are going to go well for you.

That would certainly give you a lot of courage. I mean, we have promises from God. We read them in the Bible.

But, you know, there's a whole different experience having Jesus himself show up and give those assurances, very specific ones, because you cannot read in the Bible that you're going to bear witness specifically in Rome. Now, for him to bear witness in Rome, he's got to survive these early trials. He's going to have to get to Rome someday.

And so he had that promise from Christ, even when he was taking ship to Rome and the ship was sinking in a storm. He still knew. Jesus said, I'm going to Rome, so I'm going to Rome.

You know, he had no way to be afraid. He was very much had grounds for being courageous in this situation. And he did.

He did show courage through the whole thing. And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. OK, these legal proceedings aren't working out.

Let's just do it our way. Get some assassins involved. Forty Jews, it turns out, says there were more than 40 who had formed this conspiracy.

So you've got 40 men, Jews, and they've just decided we'll just kill him. In fact, we're so determined to kill him, I bind myself by an oath I will not eat or drink until he is dead. Now, Paul lived several years after this.

So you have to figure they either broke their oath or got very hungry. But they were determined. It's clear when you make a death, I'm not going to have a meal.

No doubt they figured they'd get him killed by day, by night. You know, I'll be home for dinner, you know. And they came, these more than 40 men who made this oath, they came to the chief priests and elders and said, we have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will not eat until we have killed Paul.

Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him, but we are ready to kill him before he comes to you. So they're going to wait alongside the road. And even though Paul would almost certainly be escorted by Roman guards, these 40 men are willing to face armed conflict with the Romans in order to make sure that Paul doesn't get to Jerusalem alive.

I mean, he's in Jerusalem, but he doesn't get to the chief priests. So that sounded like a good plan to the chief priests. Tells you what kind of men you've got running a religion.

They say, okay, so we're going to lie and we're going to assassinate this guy. That sounds good. Okay, we're in.

You've got such a corrupt leadership of the Jewish religion at this particular time. And

verse 16, and when Paul's sister's son, this is interesting, heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, take this young man to the commander for he has something to tell him.

So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, this nephew of Paul said, Paul, the prisoner, I'm sorry, the centurion said to the commander, Paul, the prisoner called me to him and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you. Then the commander took him by the hand, which suggests this is quite a young boy.

We don't know his age, but you don't take a man by the hand in this manner and went aside and asked him privately, what is it that you have to tell me? And the boy said, the Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. But do not yield to them for more than 40 of them lie in wait for him. Men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him.

And now they are ready waiting for the promise from you. So the commanders let the young man depart and commanded him, tell no one that you have revealed these things to me. Now, the fact that Paul had a nephew there in Jerusalem is just interesting because we know so little about Paul's family life.

We know he came from a Pharisee family. We don't know how many siblings he had. It's obvious he had at least a sister because she had a son, at least one.

How many other family members were there of Paul in Jerusalem? How many were there in Tarsus? What did they think about him being a Christian? They are Pharisees. The family of Saul were Pharisees. Was his sister a convert? Was his sister upset with Paul for being a Christian? We don't know.

But his nephew at least was against the idea of him being murdered. And we don't read that the nephew had any, you know, opinions the same as his mother. We don't know if his mother was on Paul's side, but the nephew was obviously favorable.

And so he went to the barracks. Now how the boy got access to Paul, we don't know. But it's possible since he was a child and certainly no threat to the guards and introduced himself as a relative that they allowed him an interview with Paul.

He told him about it. Paul tells the centurion to take him to the commander and he tells him and the commander takes him seriously. Again, the commander seems to be taking Paul's side.

Everywhere the Romans are shown to be interested in justice, even though it would have been more convenient for the commander if this whole thing carried out that he sent him down and assassins killed Paul. The Roman could say to his superiors, I, you know, I

didn't know. It was a bunch of bands of rebels got him.

And how convenient for Lysias if he felt that Paul might turn him in or press charges against him for binding him as a Roman citizen. How convenient it would be if Paul happened to get killed. I mean, this commander would not be under any impulse to do the right thing here, except by his own conscience as, you know, enforcing as he would wish to do Roman justice.

It's throughout the book of Acts, the Romans are seen as honorable. And so the commander called for two centurions, which of course would be over 100 soldiers each. There were 10 centurions in Jerusalem.

There was a cohort of a thousand soldiers, so there'd be 10 centuries. He took two of them and said, prepare 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night and provide mounts to set Paul on and bring him safely to Felix, the governor. Now, it seems like an awful large armed guard to carry one prisoner, especially when there's only about 40 people trying to get him.

There's 200 soldiers, those would be on foot. Then there's 70 horsemen. And then it says 200 spearmen.

If that is so, we've got 470 people guarding Paul. That's almost half of the whole cohort that's stationed in Jerusalem. Now, it's interesting, the word spearmen here in the Greek is a Greek word that's not found anywhere else in the Bible or in Greek literature.

In other words, in all known Greek literature, this word never appears except here, which makes it really hard to know what it means. It's an ancient language and not many samples of a particular word. It makes it difficult to know what it means.

And there's different opinions about it. It says spearmen here. Some translators think it should be slingshot, slingers.

But a growing number of scholars have felt, this isn't talking about men at all, but that the word should be translated as lead horses. Horses that are being led without riders. This would possibly make sense if you've got soldiers marching, 200 soldiers marching to Caesarea, that they could ride home on horses, that they'd lead unmounted horses for them to ride home after a long march.

It's conceivable. We don't know. It could be spearmen.

It could be there's 470 people guarding Paul. Or it could be there's only 270. 70 on horses and 200 on foot.

It's not very important for us to know the answer to that, but I just want you to know the word spearmen, no one really knows for sure what that Greek word means. And there

are different theories about it. Now, it was the third hour of the night, so it would be nine o'clock at night they start their journey.

That's long after dark and long after the lights are out everywhere and the Jews, most people would be asleep. So they're going to sneak him out of town to a place more secure, Caesarea, under the governor's watch. And do so before the conspirators against Paul would wake up to find him gone.

And it says he wrote a letter to accompany him since he's got to send a prisoner to Felix, he's got to explain why. So we have the actual letter. I don't know how Luke got a hold of this letter, but it may have been in the public records at a later time for someone to access.

So this commander writes, Claudius Lysias to the most excellent governor Felix. Greetings. This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them.

Coming with troops, I rescued him having learned that he was a Roman. He colors the story a little bit. He didn't learn that he's Roman until he'd already apprehended, but this makes him look a little better.

I had learned he's Roman, so I wanted to rescue him, of course. And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their counsel. I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him worthy of death or chains.

So he says the man doesn't even have any charges against him, much less has he been condemned. Nothing that Andrews ever said of him would justify him being in chains either, and yet he is in chains. But I'm going to turn him over to you so you decide whether to keep him in chains.

He's just basically passing him up the pecking order to someone else to be his responsibility. And when it was told to me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you and also commanded his accusers to stand, to state before you the charges against him. Farewell.

Well, he hasn't told the accusers to state the charges against him, but by the time Felix would read the letter, this would be true. The accusers would now be told the case has been transferred to Caesarea, the provincial capital, and you're going to have to stand before the governor instead of a local military official. You're going to stand before a political official.

Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatrus. Antipatrus is 32 miles from Jerusalem, and it sounds like in one leg of their trip they went 32 miles. Now Paul was on a horse and so were some of the soldiers.

That's a long ways to go for the soldiers on foot, and maybe that's why they might have had some unmounted horses to carry the soldiers back. Hard to say. But that was the first stop on their way to Caesarea.

Now the next day they left the horsemen to go on with him and return to their barracks. There's the 200 footmen, and if there were 200 spearmen, they too. They turned back, went back to Jerusalem.

The immediate danger was passed. They've got a 32 mile head start on the conspirators who will in no sense catch up with them, and still there's 70 horsemen with Paul, so he's not unguarded. But the worst of it is passed, and so they send the soldiers back.

They may be needed in Jerusalem. And when they came to Caesarea, which is by the way another 25 miles, and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. And when the governor had read it, he asked what province he was from.

And when he understood that he was from Cilicia, he said, I will hear you when your accusers also have come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium. Herod had built this building, Herod the Great, back in the days before the birth of Jesus.

And it was now the headquarters for the Roman provincial administration of what was called Syria. Israel and Phoenicia were part of what was called Syria in the Roman maps. And this was the Roman capital of that region.

Now, when Felix asked Paul which province he was from, Paul said he was from Cilicia. Apparently that left Felix with the option to send him to Cilicia for the authorities there, to govern, or else to accept the case himself. And he decided to accept the case.

Why he took an interest in it, we don't know. He may have just thought it was an interesting one. So he said, I'll hear you, but we have to wait for your accusers to arrive.

Now, chapter 24. Now, after the five days, Ananias, the high priest, came down with the elders and certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.

And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation saying, seeing that through you we enjoy great peace and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight. We accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Nevertheless, not to be tedious to your any further.

I beg you to hear by your courtesy a few words from us. For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Now, the early Christians, in addition to being called the way, they were also called the Nazarenes.



Jesus was a Nazarene, meaning from Nazareth. And so they were followers of the Nazarene and the term came to be applied to them as a group. They were seen as a sect of Judaism.

If they were not a sect of Judaism, the Jews would have no particular jurisdiction over it. But there were, you know, the Pharisees, there were the Sadducees, there were Essenes, and there were the Nazarenes at this point. That is, Christian Jews were considered to be a sect of Judaism.

And he represents them as such. He even tried to profane the temple. And we seized him and wanted to judge him according to our law.

So here the actual charges that they had are brought up. His profaning the temple, which was absolutely trumped up. There's absolutely no fact behind this.

But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands. Here we were going to do justice to this man and your Roman guy intervened and he was just, he was just boorish. He just violently took him from us when we're about to do the right thing, you know.

Commanding his accusers to come to you by examining him yourself, you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him. And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so. So this guy Tertullus apparently was a lawyer specifically hired by the, as the attorney for this case.

And the Jews confirmed after Tertullus made the statement, they confirmed that he was right. Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered. He's now addressing Felix.

Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself. Because you may ascertain that it is no more than 12 days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship, some of which he's been in prison. He said, I haven't really had any time to make trouble.

And he says, and they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone or inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. Now, their accusation was that he defiled the temple. The Roman authority was saying, who cares about that? But what the Roman officials, because are you a rabble rouser? Romans care about that.

They like to keep the peace. And anyone who's a rabble rouser, they'd be interested in that. And he says, listen, I won't even address the matter of defiling the temple.

But I'll tell you that no one found me rabble rousing. I wasn't disputing. I wasn't causing a stir.

I wasn't making any trouble at all. Not in the temple, not in the synagogues, nowhere. So he's actually addressing not what he was charged with, but what the Romans would really be concerned with.

And then he says in verse 13, nor can they prove the things which they now accuse me of. So as far as the things they actually say, they can't prove that either because it frankly isn't true. But this I confess to you, that according to the way which they call a sect.

So I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets. I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

Now, after many years, I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a multitude nor with a tumult. They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me. That is, the Asian Jews who first started this, they've gone home from the Pentecost, they've gone back to Asia, they're not here.

If they think I had done something wrong, let them come here. They're the ones who would be the witnesses. They're the ones who made the accusation.

This Sanhedrin here, they weren't even there. They can't bear testimony to whether I did anything or not. Let the people who make the accusation show up.

Where are they? He's saying. Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, unless it is for this one statement, which I cried out standing among them, concerning the resurrection of the dead, I am being judged by you this day. Now we know he said that.

He said maybe that's what they have against me. That's really all they could bring. Can they say I caused any trouble? I guess maybe one thing I did tell them, I was being judged for the resurrection of the dead.

How can I be blamed for any tumult that came about from that? He's basically saying I'm not a troublemaker, which is what the Romans care most about. And he's saying, and besides these charges they're bringing up, they'll probably feel like you don't even care about those. They just happen to not be true.

The accusers aren't here. They can't testify. Those who are here don't know whether it's true or not.

All they know is that I said I'm on trial for the resurrection. They got all angry about that. Paul's saying there's really no case here.

There's no witnesses. There's no crime. And I didn't cause whatever tumult there was.

It was my fault. And then in verse 14, I have heard Torah observant Hebrew roots Christians use this verse to say that Paul said that he keeps everything that's in the law and the prophets, and therefore to argue that he was Torah observant. He does not say that he keeps the law and the prophets.

He says what he follows is the way, the Christian way, but that he believes everything written in the law and the prophets. Christians do after all. I do too.

I'm not Torah observant, but I believe everything that's written in the law and the prophets. But I don't follow God according to the law and the prophets. And I've heard this misquoted actually in a debate I had with a Hebrew roots guy.

He thought Paul was saying that he, Paul, observed all the Old Testament stuff. And obviously Paul doesn't say anything quite like that. Furthermore, he says I have confidence in God, which they themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

In this case, he's saying that his belief about the resurrection pretty much corresponds with the same thing the Pharisees believe. In other words, what he said is not that controversial, shouldn't be, because there's Jews that believe this. It's legal to believe this.

Some of the Sanhedrin right here believe it, you know. So if that's what I'm being judged for, how is that a crime? The Pharisees, if you study this out, they believed in a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous on the last day, that the dead bodies would rise. And Paul said he held that view too.

And we know he held it because he said it in many places in his writings. But here he asserts that his views on this subject are not really different than the Jews. So I'm not so sure why it should be such a controversy or why he should be so, why they should be so offended.

Now, verse 22, but when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, when Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case. Now, we do not read that Lysias the commander ever did come down, nor did Felix ever make a decision about Paul's case, which is very sad. It says that Felix had more accurate knowledge of the way, meaning of Christianity.

So Felix, though he didn't know much about this particular case, was familiar with the Christian message somewhat. He knew of it, had some acquaintance with it. And he said, you know, I'll give this some thought, but I won't make a decision until Lysias comes down.

Well, Lysias never came down. So Paul was never, never got his hearing. Beyond this one here.

I've seen the eyes. I've heard Paul. I don't see any proof here.

I don't see any witnesses who saw him violate things. I'm setting the prisoner free. That's what he should have done.

But it says later on in verse 27 that wanting to please the Jews, he left Paul bound. Now, these remaining verses at the end of this chapter, when he just kind of dismisses the Jews, I'll hear the case later when Lysias comes down. He didn't release him from prison, but he gave him less security.

He knew Paul was not a criminal. He knew Paul was not guilty. He also knew probably that if Paul stepped foot out of this particular praetorium, he'd be pulled limb from limb or killed by assassins.

So in a sense, he might have partially been doing this as a favor to Paul, but it was mostly to avoid trouble with the Jews. But he was commanded to give him some liberty and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for him or visit him. So Paul, it's like Paul set up a home there in the prison and people could visit him and bring him stuff and he could kind of go out and somewhat, but probably not very far.

And after some days when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who is Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. So he actually wanted to hear about the faith. Perhaps his wife was interested.

And so he and his wife called Paul in for a private interview or a private sermon, we could say. Now, as Paul reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, go away for now. When I have convenient time, I will call for you.

Apparently no convenient time arose because it says, meanwhile, he also hoped that money would be given to him by Paul. He was hoping for a bribe that he might release him. So he knew Paul couldn't really be held justly, but he didn't want to release him if there's a chance to get money from him.

And Paul, for some reason, was not offering him a bribe to let him out. But that's one reason he held on to him too, apparently. Meanwhile, let's see, therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.

But after two years, Porcius Festus succeeded Felix and Felix wanting to do the Jews a favor left Paul bound. So what he had in Paul was a hot potato, a man who he knew was innocent, a man who could tell him certain things about God that would make Felix tremble with conviction. Paul talking about righteousness and the judgment to come and

self-control.

These were not necessarily things that an indulgent Roman wanted to follow. He didn't want to control himself. He might want to control the country, but he doesn't want to control himself.

And Paul's talking about the need for this. And Felix apparently senses he trembles. And he says, okay, Paul, that's enough for today.

I'll call you back when I'm ready. Well, he did call him back a few times, apparently, but not ever to exonerate him or say, okay, you're right. I'm letting you go.

Instead, when it came time for Felix to be succeeded by Festus, he just thought, okay, I don't want to let this guy go because the Jews will be really angry. And when Jews get angry, they do certain things. And I don't want to keep him either.

I don't want to condemn him because he's not guilty of anything. So I'll just let Festus, I'll just pass this off to Festus and let him worry about it. And so he left Paul bound.

As it turns out, Paul remained there in Caesarea bound for two years because of the Romans not deliberating finally on his case. He only got away from Caesarea when he appealed to Caesar. As we'll see in the next chapter, Caesar sent him to Rome.

But basically nothing was happening in his case for two years, except he did have the opportunity to witness to Felix and his wife more than once, apparently. And Paul was told when he was converted that he would be a witness to kings and to rulers and so forth. And this is one of the ways God engineered that.

He had him a prisoner in the governor's palace. And he did get a chance to witness to him. More than once.

Okay, we'll break there.