



1. The rights and privileges of Roman citizenship were highly sought after (22:28). What do you learn from 22:25-29 concerning Paul's rights as a citizen of Rome?
2. What do you learn about the Roman soldiers' respect for following the law? What do you learn about their concerns for failure to follow the law?
3. In 22:21-22 we have a glimpse of why the Jews were so upset with Paul. In light of 22:30, how well do you think the tribune (commander) appreciated their reason? Was this merely spiritual blindness, or could there have been another cause for his lack of understanding (see 22:2)?
4. We are told in 22:30, "all the Council" met to hear Paul. This could have been up to 70 people. Paul had only spoken his opening sentence when he was struck in the mouth at the instruction of the High Priest. Have you ever been prevented from providing your side of the story in an unjust manner? If so, how did you react?
5. How does Paul's curse upon the High Priest in 23:3 remind you of something Jesus said? (See Matthew 23:27-28.) How would you compare the Romans' concern for following their law with that of the Jewish leaders here for their law?
6. Paul did not seem to realize the person he was reviling was the High Priest. The Scriptures do not tell us why this happened, but discuss why that may have been possible.
7. In 23:5 Paul quickly apologized when he learned the identity of the person he had reviled. He quoted a portion of Exodus 22:28. What does this tell you about Paul's respect for the law? How could you apply this when you receive unjust treatment?
8. After this incident Paul abandons his defense of the gospel before the Council as fruitless (see 22:18). If you have ever abandoned sharing the gospel with someone, what caused you to do that? How does Matthew 7:6 possibly shed light on this passage?
9. Paul created a diversion (23:6-7) by seizing on an issue that already divided the Council – Resurrection! Predictably the inquest broke down into factions. What do you think of Paul using this tactic? How might Paul's dangerous circumstances (22:22; 23:12) have led him to do this?
10. Paul then spent another night in the barracks, where the Lord spoke to him. What encouragement do you find in 23:11? What affirmation do you find in the same verse? Can you share a time when you received encouragement and affirmation from the Lord?



Trust and Circumstances
Leader Notes for Acts 22:23-23:11

The Jewish mob quietly listened to Paul, learning about his personal introduction to Jesus and his testimony, *until* he revealed Jesus had sent him with his message of hope to the Gentiles. The Jews would hear no more at that point and demanded his death. They would not accept the idea of God extending His favor toward the Gentiles. Did the Roman soldiers protecting Paul comprehend his message of hope? Did the Romans discern the Jewish rejection of Paul's mission was a condemnation of themselves? Paul was now suffering the afflictions and imprisonment foretold by the Spirit (20:22-24), as the Romans whisked him off in chains to the barracks.

The mob's reaction was so extreme that it made the tribune (commander) want more information, so he could get down to the reason the Jews were so upset with Paul. He was going to extract "the truth" by torturing Paul. A Roman tribune had the legal and military authority to do whatever was necessary to maintain the peace. He was like a colonel or brigadier general in the Roman army, in charge of 5,800 men.

Up to this point Paul had concealed his Roman citizenship. As the flogging was about to begin, he challenged the centurion's orders by mentioning his Roman citizenship and the related fact he had not been lawfully tried and convicted. The centurion immediately withdrew and reported this unexpected news to the tribune, who made a personal visit to Paul. He verified Paul was born a Roman citizen. He and his men were afraid of the consequences for violating Paul's civil rights.

Seeking to understand the bitter hatred the Jews had for Paul and to uncover the crimes Paul was alleged to have committed, the tribune unbound Paul and brought him before the chief priests and all the Council. Beginning his defense, Paul claimed he had a clear conscience before God. The high priest ordered him to be struck on the mouth. In justifiable anger Paul lashed out at the high priest for this violation of the law. This shocked those in attendance as they revealed Paul had cursed the high priest. Paul immediately apologized and sought to comply with the law (Exodus 22:28) that states, "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people."

Paul gave up his defense of the gospel after perceiving the mood of the Council and perhaps remembering Jesus' warning, "Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me" (22:18). Mindful of the mixed audience of Pharisees and Sadducees, he tactically identified himself as a Pharisee. He claimed he was being tried over his belief in the resurrection. This diverted the Council to focus on their rivalry rather than on Paul. The resurrection-believing Pharisees aligned with Paul and conceded the source of his message was possibly divine. The Sadducees would have none of this, and the factionalism became violent. The watchful tribune sent soldiers down to extract Paul out of the fray and return him to the barracks for his own safety.

The next night, while Paul was still in the barracks, the Lord "stood by him," offering encouragement. The Lord revealed that Paul would be heading to Rome. "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome." *The facts about Jesus* would be spread and be escalated to the highest human authority on earth.

