

# The Rest of the Story

Studies in the Book of Acts

***“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it –  
but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”***

*Vance Havner*

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Text

Acts 22:1-23

Topic

Paul delivered a sermon on the stairs  
to the mob that nearly beat him to death

Title

*He Takes A Licking And Keeps On Talking*

**Acts 22:1** "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now."

**Acts 22:2** And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said:

**Acts 22:3** "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.

**Acts 22:4** I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,

**Acts 22:5** as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

**Acts 22:6** "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.

**Acts 22:7** And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'

**Acts 22:8** So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

**Acts 22:9** "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.

Acts 22:10 So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.'

Acts 22:11 And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

Acts 22:12 "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt *there*,

Acts 22:13 came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him.

Acts 22:14 Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.

Acts 22:15 For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.

Acts 22:16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Acts 22:17 "Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance

Acts 22:18 and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.'

Acts 22:19 So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You.

Acts 22:20 And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'

Acts 22:21 Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'

Acts 22:22 And they listened to him until this word, and *then* they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a *fellow* from the earth, for he is not fit to live!"

Acts 22:23 Then, as they cried out and tore off *their* clothes and threw dust into the air,

## Introduction

You've probably been asked to submit a resume at some point in your life. A prospective employer wants to know if you have the required education and experience for the job. For your part you want to present yourself as the perfect person for the position being offered.

The apostle Paul's sermon on the stairs reads in part like a resume. He established his credentials as the perfect candidate for the 'job' of reaching the Jews in Jerusalem with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He said of himself to the Lord,

**Acts 22:19** ...'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You.

**Acts 22:20** And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'

Paul thought the Jerusalem Jews would see the radical transformation of his life and be drawn to Jesus Christ. But instead of 'hiring' Paul to his dream job, the Lord said to him,

**Acts 22:18** ...'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.'

**Acts 22:21** ...'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.' "

Paul seemed the perfect man for the job of reaching the Jews. God instead sent him out to the Gentiles.

Serving the Lord cannot be approached as if it were a job. God isn't in need of your education and experience. He often passes over the more qualified candidates in favor of one who seems totally unexpected. He does it to bring glory to Himself.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Let God Determine Your Work For Him , and #2 Let God Direct Your Work For Him.

#1 Let God Determine  
Your Work For Him  
(v1-16)

Paul had just been beaten nearly to death by a hostile mob in the Court of the Gentiles outside of the Temple. Two hundred armed Roman soldiers had come to his aid. While carrying him up the stairway to the Fortress of Antonia and safety Paul asked if he could address his attackers. In a moment filled with spiritual authority Paul motioned with his hand and the crowd was silenced.

He seized the opportunity to give his testimony in the hope that the Jews would see the power of the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, to transform lives.

**Acts 22:1** "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now."

[Acts 22:2](#) And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said:

We sometimes say of a person, “He’s speaking my language.” We use it not so much of a real language but to describe the fact that the person seems to understand us and is making a connection with us.

We want to connect with people. We want to speak their language. The longer you are a Christian the harder that can become. We start speaking Christian and using words nonbelievers cannot possibly understand. Make an effort to connect.

The back story to Paul’s being seized and beaten was the rumor he was teaching Jews outside of Jerusalem to despise the Law of Moses and the Temple. He was seen as being too friendly with Gentiles and was falsely charged with bringing a Gentile into the forbidden area of the Temple grounds.

To use modern language, Paul was accused of being too liberal. He presented his conservative credentials in verses three through five.

[Acts 22:3](#) "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.

[Acts 22:4](#) I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,

[Acts 22:5](#) as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

Paul pointed out that though born outside of Jerusalem in more liberal [Tarsus](#) he was brought-up in Jerusalem as a conservative. He was taught by the revered rabbi [Gamaliel](#) and strictly kept the Law of Moses.

In fact, Paul was far more zealous than anyone in that crowd. It was he who persecuted the Christians, not they. None of them bound and killed Christians. None of them could claim to have received [letters](#) from the [high priest](#). None of them had pursued Christians all the way to [Damascus](#).

They called the Jewish Christians the **Way**. The word itself refers to a road travelers take to arrive at their destination. On his way to Damascus Paul found the **Way** to Heaven.

**Acts 22:6** "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.

**Acts 22:7** And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, '**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?**'

**Acts 22:8** So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, '**I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.**'

**Acts 22:9** "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.

**Acts 22:10** So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, '**Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.**'

**Jesus of Nazareth** was the name our Lord chose to reveal Himself to Paul. He meant to let Paul know that the Man crucified on the Cross at Calvary was God and had risen from the dead.

Luke records the conversion of Paul three times. The first was in chapter nine. Here he recounted it for a Hebrew audience. In chapter twenty-six he will recount it for a Gentile audience. Each time it is slightly different, though never contradictory, depending on his listeners.

You can't have a 'canned' presentation of the Gospel or of your testimony. Connecting with people will require editing your testimony for each person or audience.

**Acts 22:11** And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

**Acts 22:12** "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt *there*,

**Acts 22:13** came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him.

**Acts 22:14** Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.

**Acts 22:15** For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.

Notice how 'Jewish' was Paul's description. He presented Ananias not as a Christian but as **a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews** in Damascus. Ananias referred to

God as **the God of our fathers**. Jesus was **the Just One** – a reference to the promised and prophesied Messiah in the Jewish Scriptures. Paul wasn't sugar-coating anything, just using terms that were meaningful to his listeners.

**Acts 22:16** And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Paul's Jewish listeners would have understood him to be saying he had been converted on the road to Damascus and should now give a public testimony of the washing away of his sins by faith in Jesus Christ by being water baptized.

Sadly there are those who take this verse out of context to try to prove you **must** be baptized to be saved.

What do we say to them?

1. First, that is *not* how the original words read. Baptism is something Paul did because he had been saved not in order to be saved.
2. Second, it's clear that Paul was saved before he was baptized. In Galatians 1:11-12 Paul says that the Gospel was presented to Him by Jesus and not later by Ananias. Verse ten of chapter twenty-two indicates Paul had already submitted to Jesus by faith before being baptized.
3. Third, when Ananias prayed for Paul to receive his sight he said to him, **Be filled with the Holy Spirit** Acts 9:17). Paul thus received the Holy Spirit (and must have been saved) before water baptism.
4. Fourth, of the three times Luke recounted Paul's conversion only once did he mention Ananias' statement about the washing away of sins.
5. Fifth, a whole bunch of other verses explain that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone apart from any works – including baptism. There is even a statement by the apostle Peter to the effect that baptism is not a washing away of your sins (First Peter 3:21).

Paul was simply recounting his testimony. He was on his way to kill Christians when the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, appeared to him. He was saved and his life radically transformed.

For our application I would note the phrase in verse fifteen, **for you will be His witness to all men.** **All men** meant Jews and Gentiles but (as we will see in a moment) especially Gentiles.

If you go back and read the conversion experience in chapter nine you'll see that the Lord already had determined Paul's work. Jesus told Ananias that Paul was he was **a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake"** (Acts 9:15-16).

God has already determined **your** work for Him. You read in Ephesians 2:10,

**Ephesians 2:10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

God can and will use everything in our background. But it is a mistake to try to predict the **works which God [has] prepared beforehand** by looking at our education and experience.

In most cases we see that Bible characters had little or no qualifications. They often resisted the call believing themselves unqualified for the task. God called them then supplied them.

The opposite exhortation we're getting today is just as necessary. What we think qualifies us to work for God is often not the work God has determined. **God doesn't need our qualifications.** Often they get in the way of His being glorified through us.

The classic example of this is a seminary education. In most denominations it is required in order to qualify you to be a minister. The sad truth is that many men and now women who are 'qualified' by their education were never called by God. They have no gifting, no empowering – only what I call an em-papering because they have a piece of paper, a degree, that makes them appear bonafide.

D.L. Moody was a shoe salesman in Boston when he was saved in April of 1855. In May of that year his application for membership in his church was denied! The pastor who had led Moody to Christ said of him,

I can truly say, and in saying it I magnify the infinite grace of God as bestowed upon him, that I have seen few persons whose minds were spiritually darker than was his when he came into my Sunday School class; and I think that the committee of the Mount Vernon Church seldom met an applicant for membership more unlikely ever to become a Christian of clear and decided views of Gospel truth, still less to fill any extended sphere of public usefulness.<sup>1</sup>

Moody went on to be the greatest evangelist of the nineteenth century. God gifted him; God empowered him.

God used Moody; then Moody established a school. Now we require that folks go to school before God can use them!

We've got it backwards. Qualifications can get in the way. They can keep us from magnifying the infinite grace of God bestowed upon His servants.

#2 Let God Direct  
Your Work For Him  
(v17-23)

It's no criticism that Paul was zealous to see the Jerusalem Jews saved. But his qualifications didn't qualify him for the work. God had something else in mind.

[Acts 22:17](#) "Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance

Commentators think this happened about three years after Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus.

Don't stumble over the word **trance**. His hearers would have understood him to mean that the Lord appeared to him in a vision.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia

Acts 22:18 and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.'

Acts 22:19 So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You.

Acts 22:20 And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'

Acts 22:21 Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.' "

Paul thought he was the best man for the job. He made his case – and we would see it as a strong case. We would have thought just as Paul thought.

The Lord knew the Jerusalem Jews would not receive Paul's testimony. He had a whole other plan for His chosen apostle out among the Gentiles.

Acts 22:22 And they listened to him until this word, and *then* they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a *fellow* from the earth, for he is not fit to live!"

Acts 22:23 Then, as they cried out and tore off *their* clothes and threw dust into the air,

The Jews hated the Gentiles. Any thought God might save them was sickening to them. They went wild and acted-out their emotion by tearing their clothes and throwing dust into the air.

Every time we see this Jew-Gentile hostility it is a good opportunity to check ourselves for biases and prejudices that have no place in the heart of a believer.

The mob fulfilled what Jesus had told Paul decades earlier – that Jerusalem would not receive his testimony, powerful though it was.

Honestly, if we were in charge of first century evangelism we would have sent a Gentile to reach the Gentiles. It's how we think. We think in terms of qualifications more than calling.

God directs your work. Your lack of qualifications doesn't disqualify you. But neither do your qualifications necessarily qualify you!

Let's discover the good works God has before ordained by walking with Jesus in love.

