

**THE CHURCH'S WITNESS TO THE WORLD:
Paul's Arrest, Imprisonment, and Defense in Jerusalem and Caesarea
Acts 21:17–26:32**

Memory Verses: *I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some (1 Cor. 9:22b ESV). But in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you (1 Pet. 3:15 ESV).*

Background Helps:

Paul's three great missionary journeys are over. God has done great things among the Gentiles through his ministry (Acts 21:19). Paul's heart is now set on Rome and the regions beyond (see Acts 19:21; 23:11; Rom. 1:15; 15:23-24). But first, he must make a final appearance in Jerusalem, giving a last gospel appeal to Israel.

Over the next two weeks (Acts 21:17–26:32), we will see Paul offer a series of defenses both of himself and the gospel before various groups and individuals in Palestine. He is placed on trial five different times. Notice the exact charges that are brought against him and the defense that he presents. Notice also how he turns these hearings into an opportunity for witness. Finally, notice the remarkable parallels between the arrest, accusation, and trial of Paul and the arrest, accusation, and trial of Jesus Christ.

Lesson Helps:

Here are two alternative lesson plans both having a single aim covering the two-week period.

1. My students will learn how Paul used his personal testimony in his defense, so that they will prepare and use their own testimony in witness to others. On the first Sunday, study Paul's testimony before the Jewish crowd in Acts 22. Ask class members to write out their own testimony (perhaps beginning in class and finishing during the week). Ask them to bring their completed testimonies on the second Sunday when you will study Paul's testimony before King Agrippa in Acts 26. Ask several to read their testimonies. Collect the testimonies so that you can write some helpful comments and pass them back the following Sunday (see guidelines below). Have prayer that God will give your students opportunity to share their testimonies with unbelievers during this several week period, and then share their experiences with the class. Emphasize the second week's memory verse, 1 Peter 3:15. Here are some important principles to follow in giving your testimony:
 - 1) Basic outline:
 - a) What I was before I became a Christian
 - b) How I became a Christian
 - c) What I am after I became a Christian (or, how Jesus has changed my life)


(Note: If you became a Christian at an early age, you could share (a) what my life would have been like if I had not become a Christian, (b) how I became a Christian, and (3) what difference being a Christian has made in my life.

- 2) Emphasize the positive benefits of being a Christian and be specific.
- 3) Identify with your prospect, selecting truthful statements about yourself that will enable him/her to see himself/herself in your life.
- 4) Include the gospel in your testimony.
- 5) Use quotations and pictorial language to make it interesting.
- 6) Keep it brief, sticking to the main points (approximately three minutes).
- 7) Avoid clichés that are meaningless to non-Christians.¹

See which of these principles you can find in Paul's two testimonies (Acts 22 and 26). What other practical pointers do you learn from his use of testimony?

2. My students will learn how Paul faced persecution in Palestine – arrest, false accusation, imprisonment – so that they will follow his example when they are persecuted for Christ's sake. Survey the various scenes where Paul is on trial. What character traits stand out? What parallels do you see between the experiences of Paul and Christ? Challenge your students to be willing to suffer for Christ's sake and to do so in this same Christ-like manner. Repeat this same basic lesson the second week but using the passages in Acts from the reading schedule.

Home Assignment:

 Read Acts 27–28.

 Memorize Acts 1:8.

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¹ Adapted from D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1972), 81-88.