

Text: Ac 22.1-5

At the end of November, we left the apostle Paul on the steps of the fortress of Antonia, clearing his throat as he prepared to speak to the angry Jewish mob who lately was trying to kill him.

Today we will begin a look at his message on that occasion.

As we start with this, I am somewhat uncertain on how to proceed. Some of the material here and in parts of Acts to come are repetitive. Not only do they repeat themselves, but they repeat material we've already covered, with a few new details thrown in.

The question is, should we speed up and treat the speeches as a whole, or should we do the usual and break them up into pieces as I work through a thorough understanding of them?

And the trouble is, I always find more material as I study these speeches than I have time for in just one message.

So, we will do the usual! I will try to keep the content of the whole speech together as we work our way through.

One of the commentators said this about this section, and about the rest of Acts:

"In a sense all the remainder of Acts is Paul's defense before the Jews. Paul is shown to be a faithful Jew, particularly when one agrees with him that faith in the risen Christ is the true culmination of Judaism."¹

I gave our message this title:

Beginning the Apology

An "apology" is a "defense." We don't usually think of that word in that sense, but we do use the term "apologetics."

Apologetics refers to a defense of the gospel, or of Christian theology, when Christians use the term.

¹ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 457.

In our passage, Paul will begin defending himself against the accusations of the Jews. Thus, our title, *Beginning the Apology*.

As we think about the next chapters, apologetics will make up a big part of the messages we bring. How would you defend what you believe?

We live in a world that mocks Christianity, makes fun of Christians, or even worse, thinks Christians should be suppressed.

How do we defend ourselves against these challenges?

We can learn something from Paul's defense of himself, and apply those lessons to the challenges we may face.

Read Ac 22.1-5 (Paul's speech on this occasion goes all the way to v. 21)

Proposition: One part of defending God's truth is to show how close unbelieving men are to the truth.

I. The thirty-year-old conflict

A. The name of the conflict: Judaism vs. Christianity

B. The history of the conflict

1. Began with the ministry of Jesus and growing Jewish opposition to the Messiah

Jn 15.18 ¶ "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you.

Jn 15.24-25 "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. ²⁵ "But *they have done this* to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.'

2. Continued with the ministry of the apostles
 - a. Shock of Pentecost and mass conversion (Acts 2)
 - b. Reaction to healing the man at the Beautiful Gate (Acts 3-4)
 - c. Ongoing opposition culminating in Stephen's death (Acts 5-7)
 - d. The persecution and conversion of Saul (Acts 8-9)
 - e. James killed and Peter imprisoned (Acts 12)

- f. Violent reaction to Paul's ministry in the First Missionary Journey – instigated by unbelieving Jews (Acts 13-14)
- g. Violent reaction to Paul's ministry in the Second Missionary Journey – instigated by unbelieving Jews (Acts 17-18)
- h. Violent reaction to Paul's ministry in the Third Missionary Journey – instigated by unbelieving Jews (Acts 20.18-19)
- i. And now the violent arrest of Paul in Jerusalem by the Jews, Acts 21

"In a sense all the remainder of Acts is Paul's defense before the Jews. Paul is shown to be a faithful Jew, particularly when one agrees with him that faith in the risen Christ is the true culmination of Judaism."²

3. The rest of Acts:

- a. This speech before the mob in Jerusalem (Acts 22)
- b. A plot to kill Paul in Jerusalem, subsequent movement of Paul to the governor in Caesarea (Acts 23)
- c. Paul's defense before the governor, Felix (Acts 24)
- d. Paul's defense before the governor, Festus, and Herod Agrippa (Acts 25-26)
- e. Paul's trip to Rome for trial before Caesar [presents Paul as harmless and helpful] (Acts 27)
- f. Paul in Rome, appealing to the Jews in Rome, with most of them rejecting the Messiah (Acts 28)

I call this point "the thirty-year conflict" because I include the ministry of Christ. The year of Paul's arrest is about AD 57, Jesus' ministry began [by my reckoning] about AD 27: thus thirty years of conflict.

² Polhill, 457.

II. The concept of “apology” (defense)

A. Paul uses the word “defense” as he opens his speech (1)

1. “Defense” = ἀπολογία, apologia
2. “An ἀπολογία is a defense speech in which one makes the case for what one is doing or believing.”³
3. “*verbal defense, speech in defense...* [in which] one labors to excuse or to make good his cause”⁴

B. Early Christian writers occupied themselves with “apologies”

1. They wrote to Roman officials, including emperors
2. Their idea was to defend Christianity as non-violent and unthreatening

C. Paul’s motivation before the angry Jews

1. To defend himself as an orthodox Jew
2. To use that standpoint to point them to their Messiah once again
3. To explain his ministry among Gentiles as non-threatening to Jews

The last point will rouse the crowd once again, for they cannot accept the notion of Christianity for themselves, but especially as it includes Gentiles.

However, as Paul begins, they become silent, especially as he speaks to them in Aramaic, their native language at the time.
(2)

III. The first layer of Paul’s defense

A. I am a Jew (3)

1. He uses an emphatic subject
2. He identifies himself as “a man Jew,” *i.e.* “a Jewish man”

³ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 658–59.

⁴ Joseph Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (International Bible Translators (IBT), Inc., 1889), BibleWorks, v.8.

3. The rest of the verse expands with proof that he is “a man Jew”

B. The descriptive phrases (3)

1. Born in Tarsus, by birth a Hellenistic Jew
2. Raised in this city, by influence a Palestinian Jew
3. Educated under Gamaliel, by education a Pharisaic Jew

“‘Born, reared, educated’ was a fixed biographical formula common in Greek writings. ... It underscores the point Paul wanted to make to the Jerusalem crowd: he was no Diaspora maverick but was nurtured from childhood in the holy city itself.”⁵

Note: this is the passage where we learn that Paul was a student of Gamaliel

a. By strictures: his education was according to the Law

Gal 1.14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

b. By zeal: he was zealous for God even as they were

- 1) He understands their motivation
- 2) He underscores his respect for the Law

“In his conciliation he went to the limit and puts himself by the side of the mob in their zeal for the law, mistaken as they were about him.”⁶

⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, 457–58.

⁶ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Ac 22.3.

C. The record of his life in Judaism (4-5)

1. He was a persecutor of “this Way”

- a. The term “the Way” is thought to be an early self-description of believing Jews, used first in Acts 9.2

Ac 9.2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

“The Essene sect at Qumran also described itself as ‘the way’; this was a natural designation for a group that believed that it alone followed the way of righteousness.”⁷

- b. It is next mentioned in connection with the riot in Ephesus, Ac 19.23

Ac 19.23 ¶ About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way.

- c. Then Paul mentions it here in our text, and in his defense before Felix in Ac 24 (Ac 24.14, 22)

It seems to be a term favored by Paul himself, but well known among the Jews of Jerusalem

2. His activity was to pursue men and women to the death, putting them in prisons to await capital trial
3. The high priest and Sanhedrin could confirm his activity
- a. Conversion: roughly AD 32
- b. Now 25 years on, yet men on the Council knew him and his record
- c. He acted under their authority, going as far as Damascus

⁷ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary : New Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Ac 9.1-2.

D. Paul's purpose

1. To build common ground
2. To open their ears to the message he wanted to give them

Proposition: One part of defending God's truth is to show how close unbelieving men are to the truth.

Conclusion:

When we speak up for Christ, our message should begin from points of agreement.

- We teach all men are sinners, most men will agree.
- We identify ourselves as sinners ... most men will agree.

We explain there is no ready solution to the sin problem, and many men will agree.

We offer Jesus as the one solution to the sin problem: and here they must decide.