**Acts 22-24** - November 8th

Today’s Summary: Don’t you want to hear God’s voice or have Jesus appear to you like He did to Paul? I do. I always am begging God, especially lately, “God, please just speak, I want to do Your will and I need to hear You alone clearly. Just tell me exactly what to do and I will do it. You promise to lead us and speak and my heart doesn’t want to miss Your will, so it’s not nice that you are not letting me hear You. And yet this begging doesn’t always get the God of the universe to act or speak audibly or to appear, as He did clearly for Paul in today’s Scriptures. I don’t hear His voice, but I do get signs or verses or people saying or sending me the right thing at the right time. Or circumstances taking place that clearly make me know the Godly, Biblical way to respond or act. So why do you think He does that? Doesn’t communicate as clear to me or you maybe as He did so clearly to Paul and the apostles in this season? Let’s discuss in the Comments below.

**22 1**“Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.” **2**When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said: **3**“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. **4**I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, **5**as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

**6**“About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. **7**I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’ **8**“‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. “‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. **9**My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. **10**“‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked. “‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. **There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.**’ **11**My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

**12**“A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. **13**He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him.

**14**“Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. **15**You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. **16**And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

**17**“When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance **18**and saw the Lord speaking to me. ‘Quick!’ he said. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.’ **19**“‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. **20**And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’ **21**“Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’ ”

Paul the Roman Citizen

**22**The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, “Rid the earth of him! He’s not fit to live!”

**23**As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, **24**the commander ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and interrogated in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this. **25**As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, “Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been found guilty?”

**26**When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. “What are you going to do?” he asked. “This man is a Roman citizen.” **27**The commander went to Paul and asked, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” “Yes, I am,” he answered. **28**Then the commander said, “I had to pay a lot of money for my citizenship.” “But I was born a citizen,” Paul replied. **29**Those who were about to interrogate him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.

Paul Before the Sanhedrin

**30**The commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews. So the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the members of the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.

**23**Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, “My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.” **2**At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. **3**Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!”

**4**Those who were standing near Paul said, “How dare you insult God’s high priest!” **5**Paul replied, “Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.’” *(Exodus 22:28)*

**6**Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, “My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.” **7**When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. **8**(The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)

**9**There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. “We find nothing wrong with this man,” they said. “What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” **10**The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks. **11**The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”

The Plot to Kill Paul

**12**The next morning some Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. **13**More than forty men were involved in this plot. **14**They went to the chief priests and the elders and said, “We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. **15**Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here.”

**16**But when the son of Paul’s sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul. **17**Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, “Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him.” **18**So he took him to the commander. The centurion said, “Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.” **19**The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, “What is it you want to tell me?”

**20**He said: “Some Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. **21**Don’t give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request.” **22**The commander dismissed the young man with this warning: “Don’t tell anyone that you have reported this to me.”

Paul Transferred to Caesarea

**23**Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, “Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. **24**Provide horses for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix.”

**25**He wrote a letter as follows:

**26**Claudius Lysias, To His Excellency, Governor Felix:

Greetings.

**27**This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen. **28**I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin. **29**I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment. **30**When I was informed of a plot to be carried out against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also ordered his accusers to present to you their case against him.

**31**So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris. **32**The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. **33**When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. **34**The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, **35**he said, “I will hear your case when your accusers get here.” Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod’s palace.

Paul’s Trial Before Felix

**24**Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. **2**When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: “We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. **3**Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. **4**But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.

**5**“We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect **6**and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. **8**By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him.” **9**The other Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.

**10**When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: “I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. **11**You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. **12**My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. **13**And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. **14**However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, **15**and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. **16**So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

**17**“After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. **18**I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. **19**But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. **20**Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin - **21**unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: ‘It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.’”

**22**Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. “When Lysias the commander comes,” he said, “I will decide your case.” **23**He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.

**24**Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. **25**As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, “That’s enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.” **26**At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him.

**27**When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

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My answer for Today’s Summary Question - He does it so that we interact in COMMUNITY, that we SEEK WISE COUNSEL from OTHERS so we all learn, and it is not just a private matter between you and God. It’s about strengthening the Church together so we sharpen and encourage and rebuke one another so we all can get the blessing together and share in fellowship while on this earth.