

Acts 21:17-40

# Lots of (wrong) assumptions...

## Paul is arrested at the Temple



When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly.



The story so far:...

A good start but how is going to turn out?

The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

Meeting the Jerusalem church leaders  
Feed - back on all that the Lord had done.



And deliver the gifts

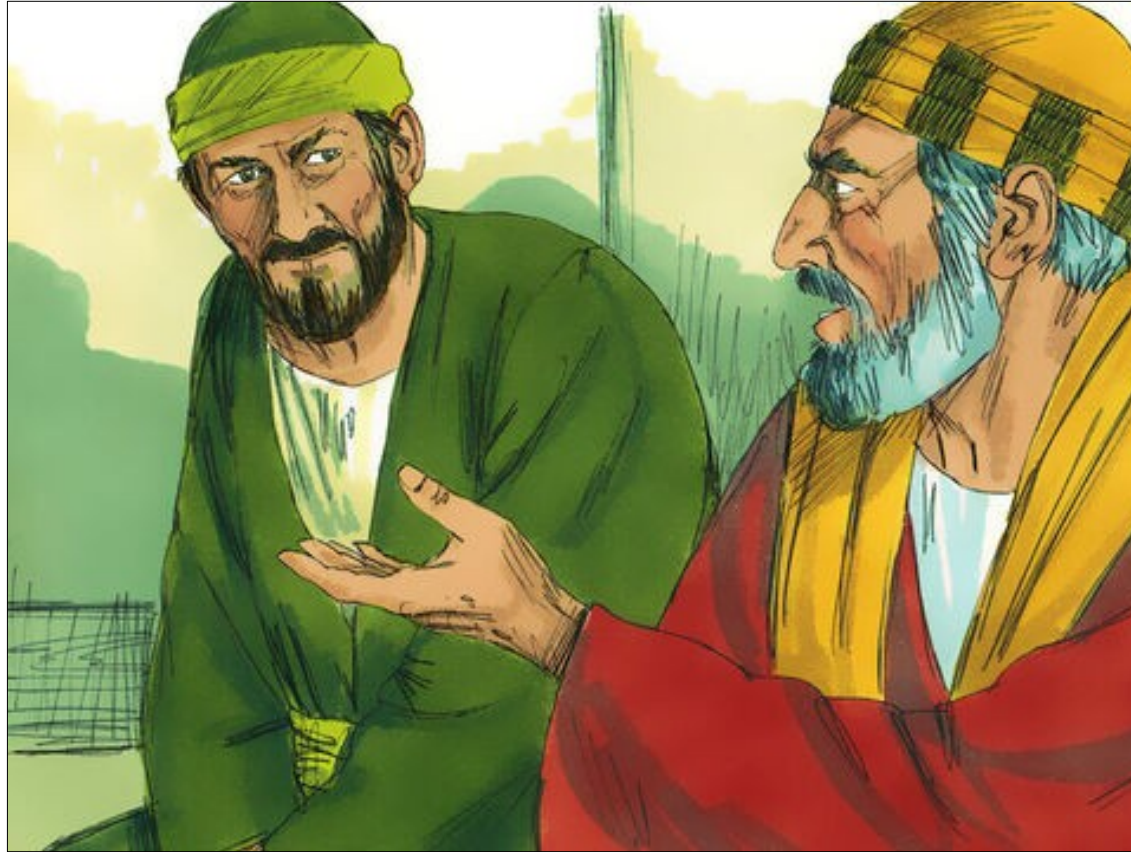
When they heard this, they praised God.

Good news to celebrate





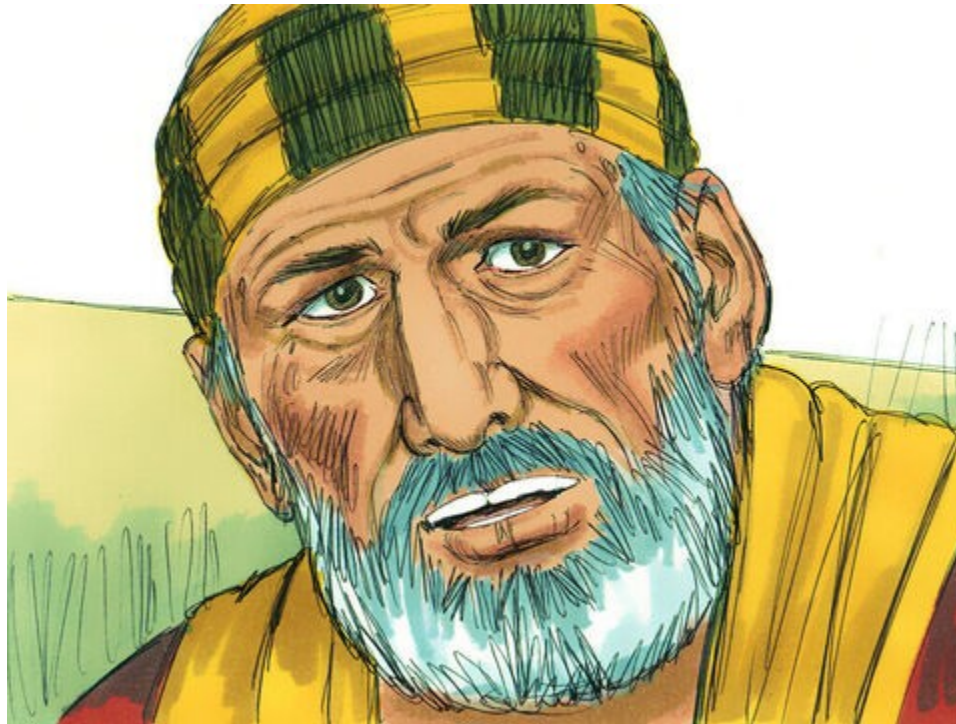
Then they said to Paul.. "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law.



Good news here too—  
and they are still faithful to the Bible teaching

# Assumptions?

They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.



BUT we have a problem – fake news reports

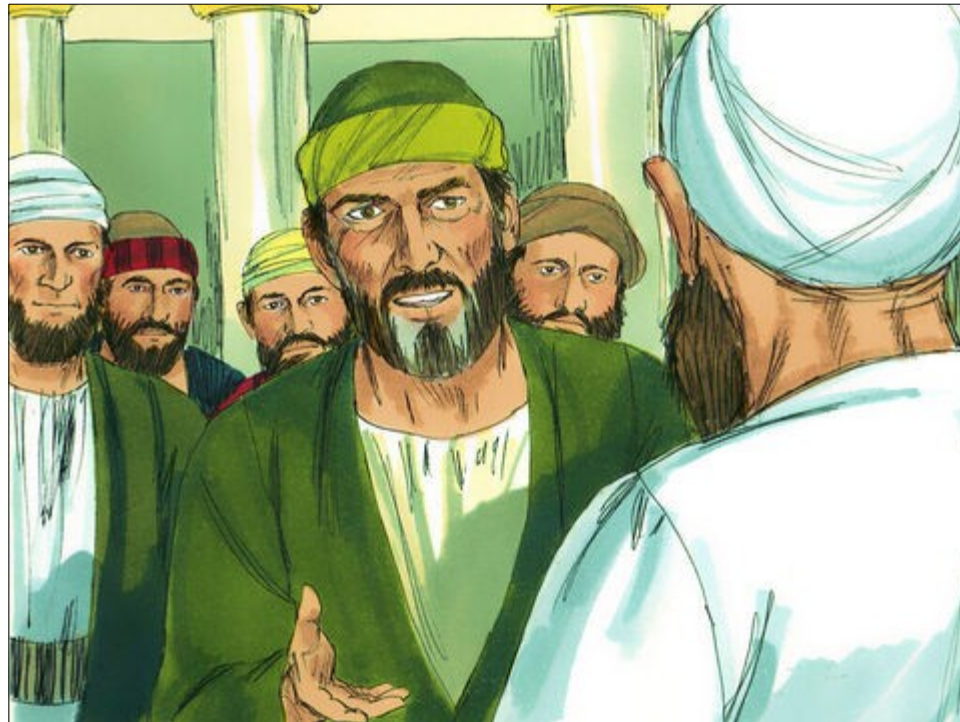
Who/what do you believe? How can you be sure?

What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come,  
so do what we tell you.



We have a plan. Had they prayed about it?  
Will it do what they want and give a good result ?

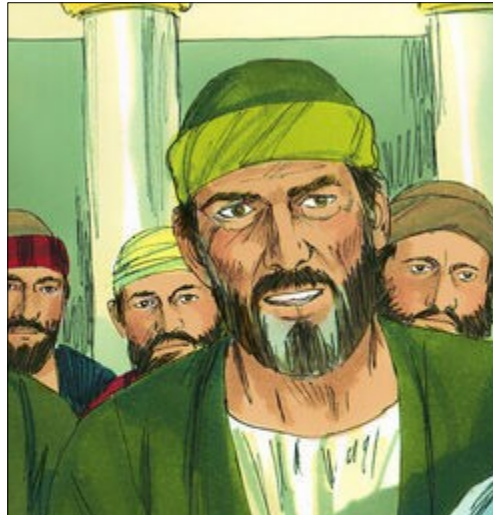
There are four men with us who have made a vow. Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law.



Show them by your support and paid for by you.



Then everybody will know  
there is no truth in these reports about you,  
but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law.



Paul's point was that while they were free to observe these rituals, however, they were not the basis of being better than others or a means of attaining salvation.

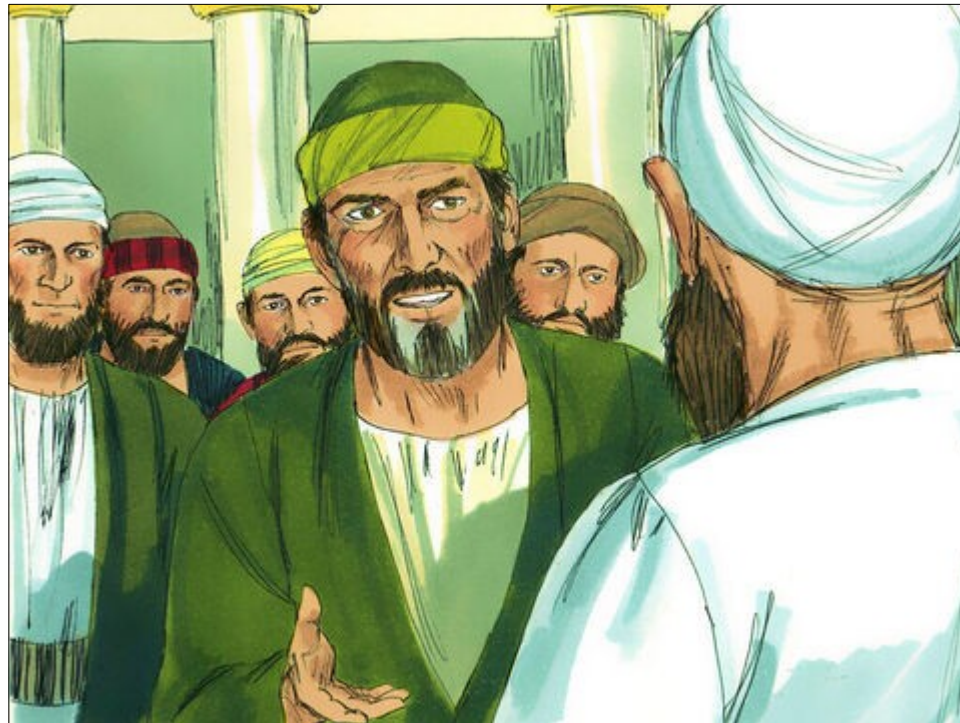
As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality."

They had no problem with the gentile believers  
(as evidenced by the godly visitors with Paul).  
It had been sorted at the council years ago.

They were to live a new non-pagan, inoffensive lifestyle



The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.



Paul agreed and joined in their purification.  
He was willing to try to help clear up matters.

When the seven days were nearly over,  
some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple.



It was all going smoothly, then...  
People from Asia (Ephesus etc.) recognised him.  
Why was Paul at the temple?



## Assumptions?

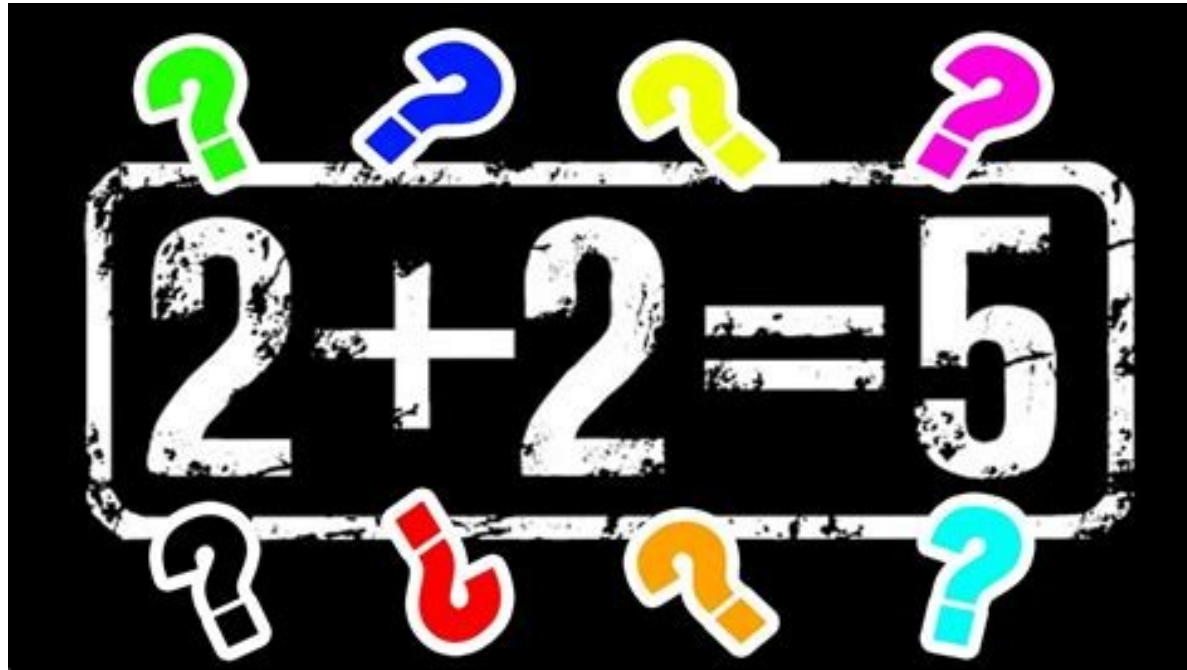
They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, shouting, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place."



They started a riot. Accusations based on assumptions

# Assumptions?

(They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple area.)



The danger of jumping to conclusions.

The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut.



Avoiding trouble

People join the crowd – curiosity – Was the message passed on and exaggerated?

While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar.



They intended to kill Paul.  
There were observers. It was a cause for concern  
to the Roman authorities - rioting!



He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd.



They had easy access to temple mount – their barracks were close by.  
It was urgent so they ran.

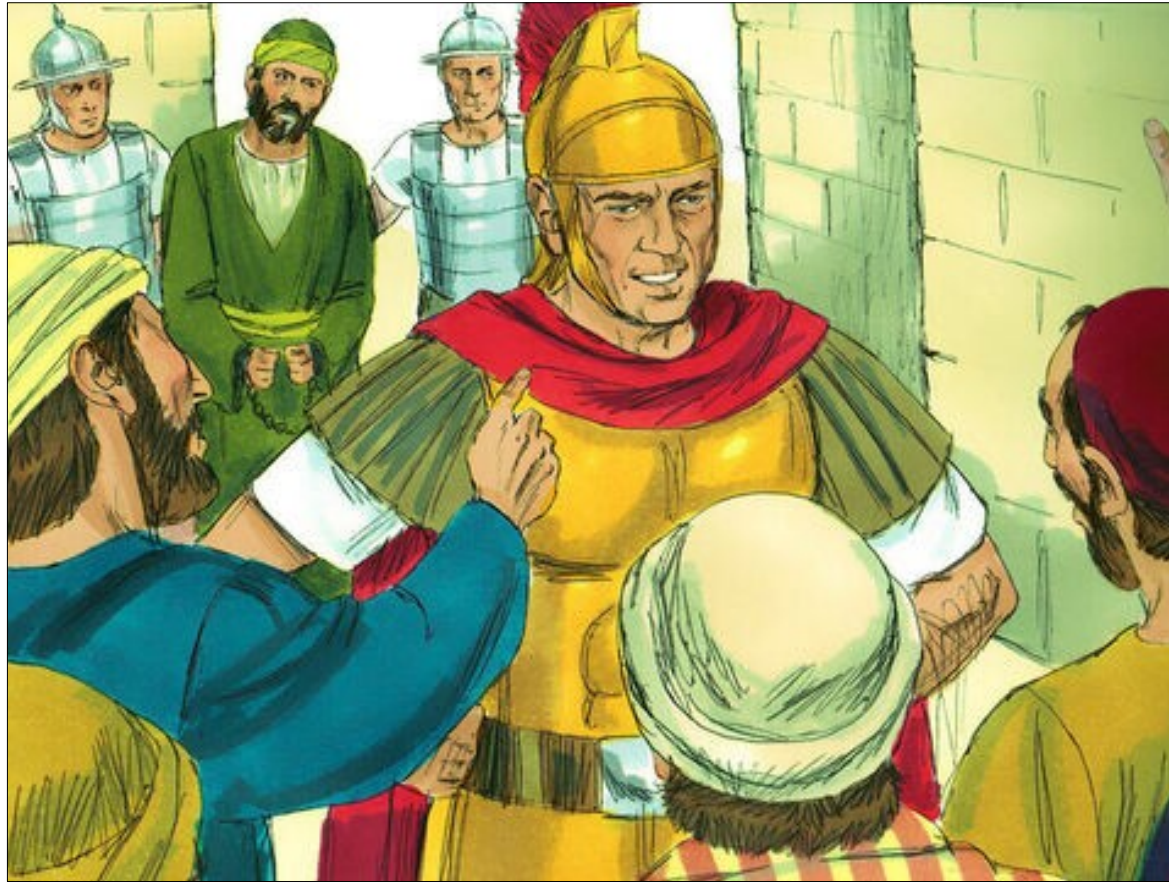
When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers,  
they stopped beating Paul.



Here comes 'the law' !  
It was a God activated timely intervention.

# Assumptions?

The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains.



They arrest him! Not the thugs.  
Perhaps Paul was reminded of the prophecy.

Then he asked who he was and what he had done.

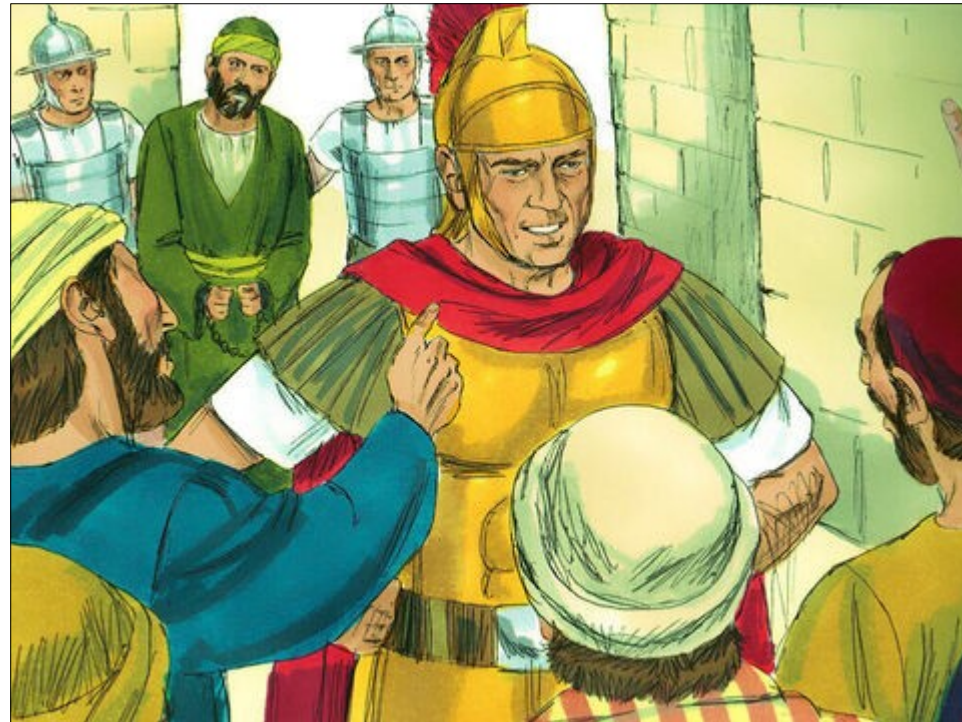


Get the crowd's side of the story?

It's good to try and get the facts.



Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks.



A muddle!

So interrogate the prisoner – get his side of the story.

When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers.



He needed a guard protection - steps were higher up

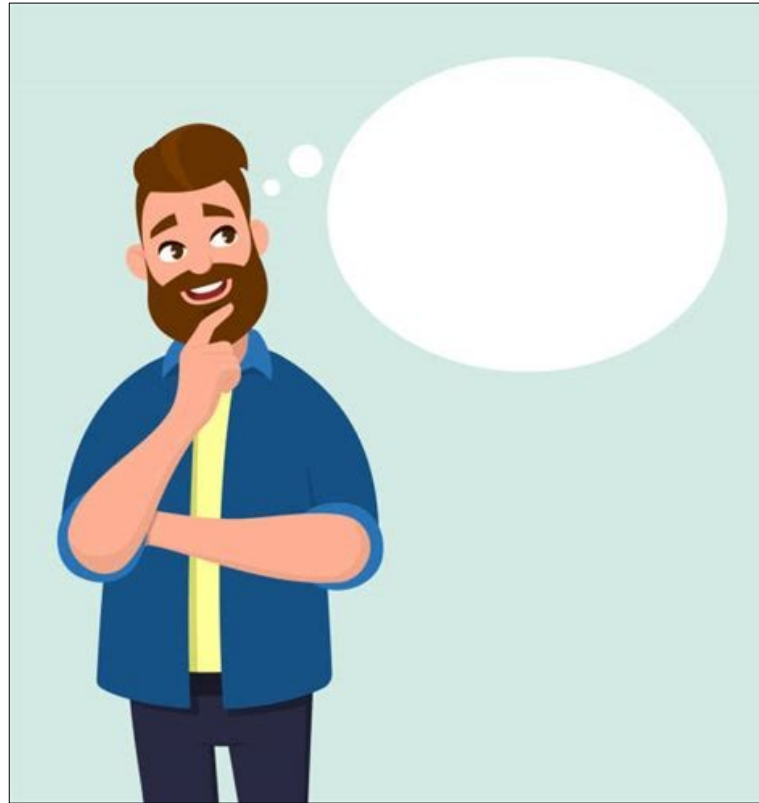
The crowd that followed kept shouting, "Away with him!"

The mob's intention was quite clear.  
'Away with him' didn't mean 'Take him away'



They said that about Jesus too!

As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, "May I say something to you?"



Paul made a polite request.  
What does it tell us about Paul's state of mind?  
What did he want to do?



# Assumptions?

"Do you speak Greek?" he replied. "Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert some time ago?"



He was surprised.  
He assumed he was the  
leader of a terrorist group.

Paul answered,  
"I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city."



Paul gave his credentials  
(But the officer didn't listen  
properly – see later)

A Jew (still Jewish as a  
Christian, not an Egyptian)  
and a citizen of a Roman  
colonial city.

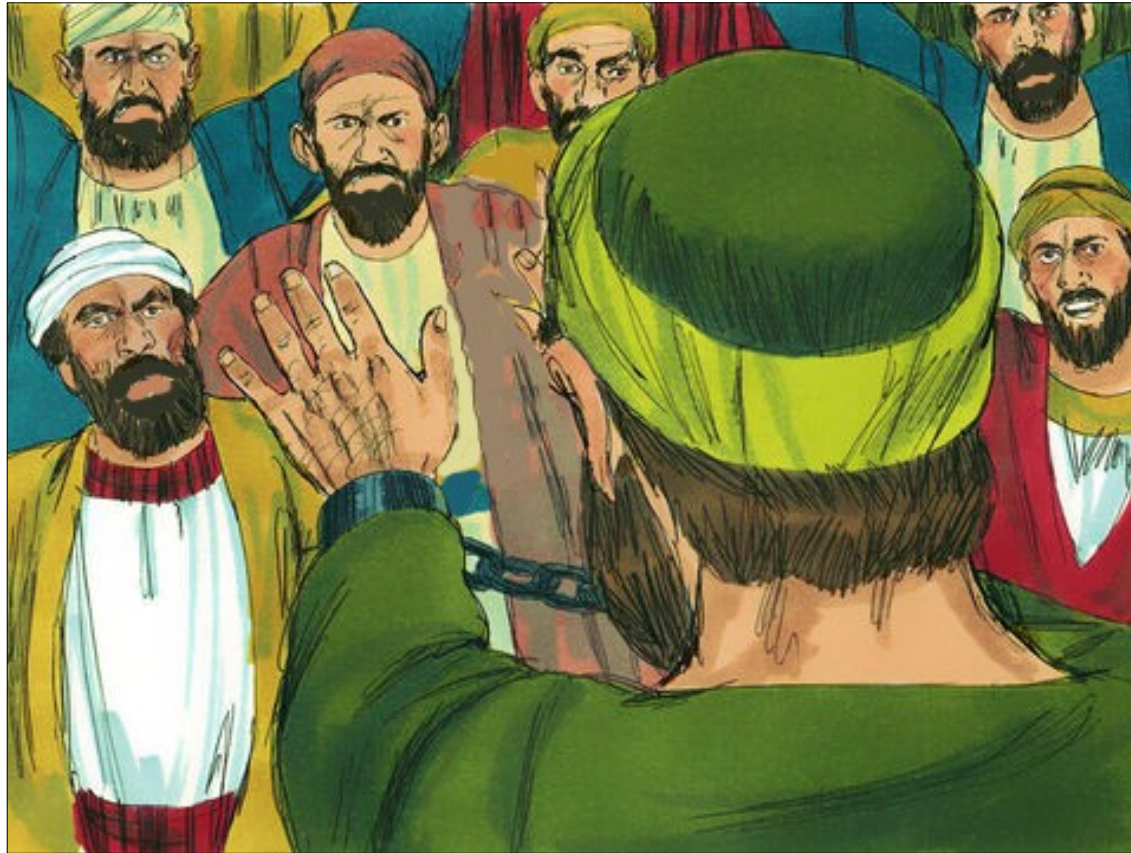
“Please let me speak to the people.”

Having received the commander’s permission,  
Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd.



His polite request was granted  
He asked for a hearing – giving hand signals to quieten the crowd.  
A golden opportunity to preach the gospel to his own people.

When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic..



He was patient until he could be heard from the upper level stair. He spoke in their home language. (Paul was multilingual) . The text says Hebrew rather than Aramaic (similar but not the religious language). He got their attention.



We can imagine how things might turn out, but if we jump to conclusions based on what we hear we could get it wrong.

It is best to follow the master's advice:-

*Matthew 6:33-34 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

