

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

and a sad turning point.

Acts 22:1 – 30 .

"Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defence"
When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic,
they became very quiet.



Brothers and fathers,
We are part of the
family.

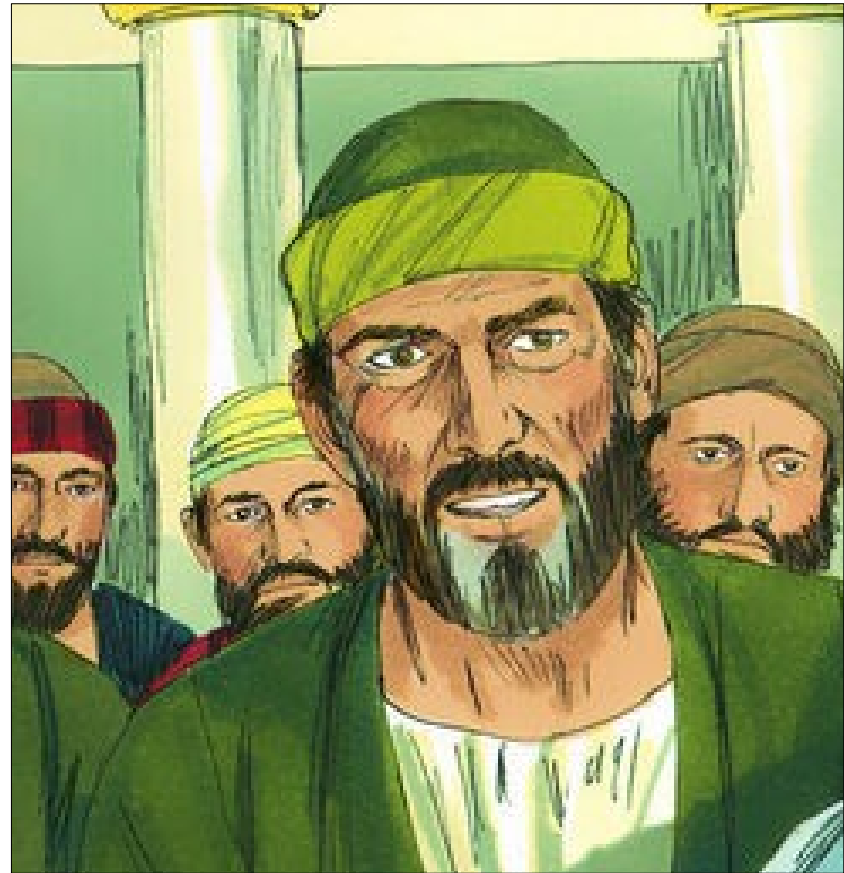
Falsely accused

He speaks in their
language.

This is Luke's 2nd
account of Paul's
conversion.

Then Paul said.. "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.

Paul's glowing credentials:-
He **IS** a Jew
Brought up in **Jerusalem**
Trained under the best
Just as **keen** as you all.



I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as also the high priest and all the Council can testify.



He had persecuted followers of this Way, being as hostile as you feel.

There was clear evidence of it – just ask your leaders.

I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.



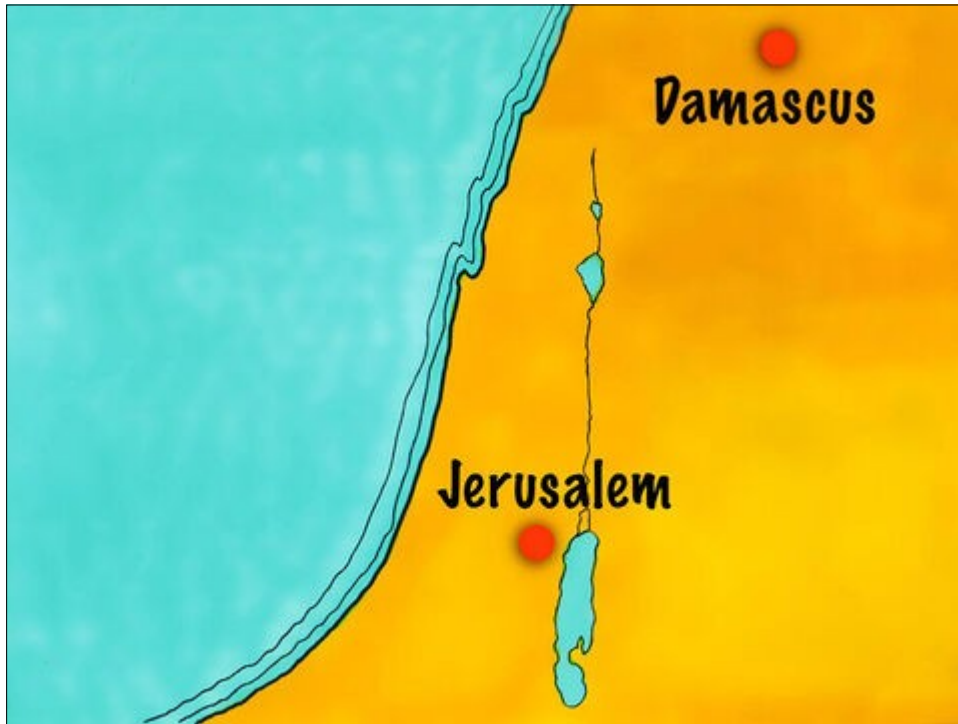
Over-the-top zeal

I felt just like you do now.

The message is clear: “I understand why you have attacked me. I was once an attacker also. I understand where you are coming from.”

But God stepped in ...

About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?'



He was 'arrested' by the GLORY
God's voice – Known by name, persecuting ME
I was opposing God's purposes!

‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. “‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

“‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked.



The answer came as a total shock

The Lord is Jesus of Nazareth.

Paul’s audience had heard of him.

The witnesses had some experience, but the Lord spoke personally to Paul.

What response was he to make?

‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’



First steps first.
You will find out.
Think about what you
have discovered first.

My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

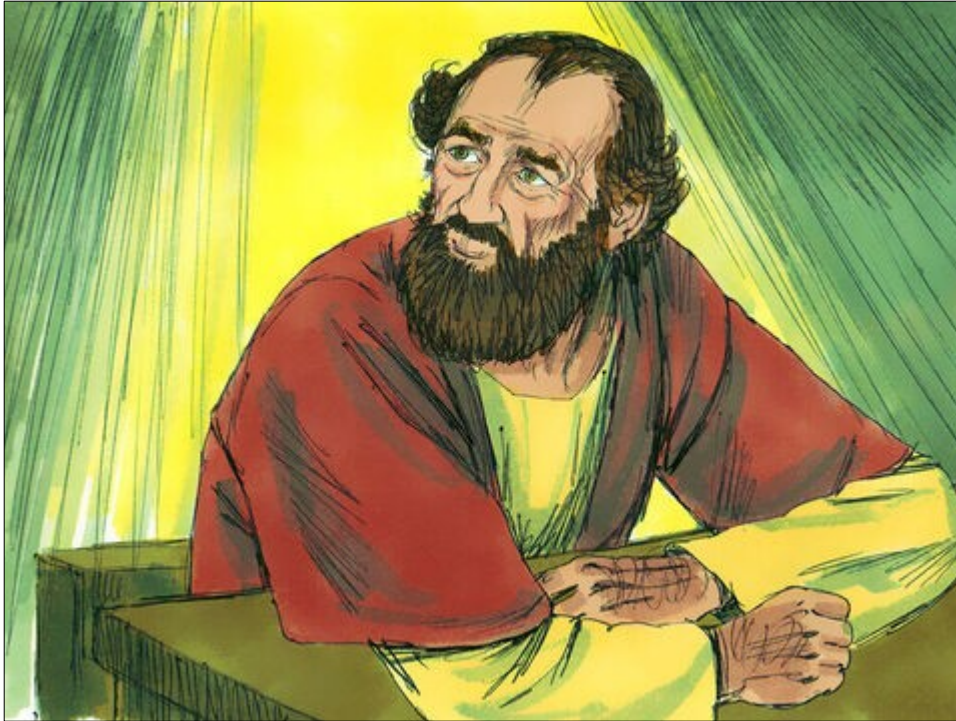


Humbled and helpless.

His physical state was a reflection of his spiritual state.

He had got everything wrong about Jesus, the Messiah.

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.



Ananias,
a devout man (a good Jew)
came to help me and
welcomed me into the
Christian community.

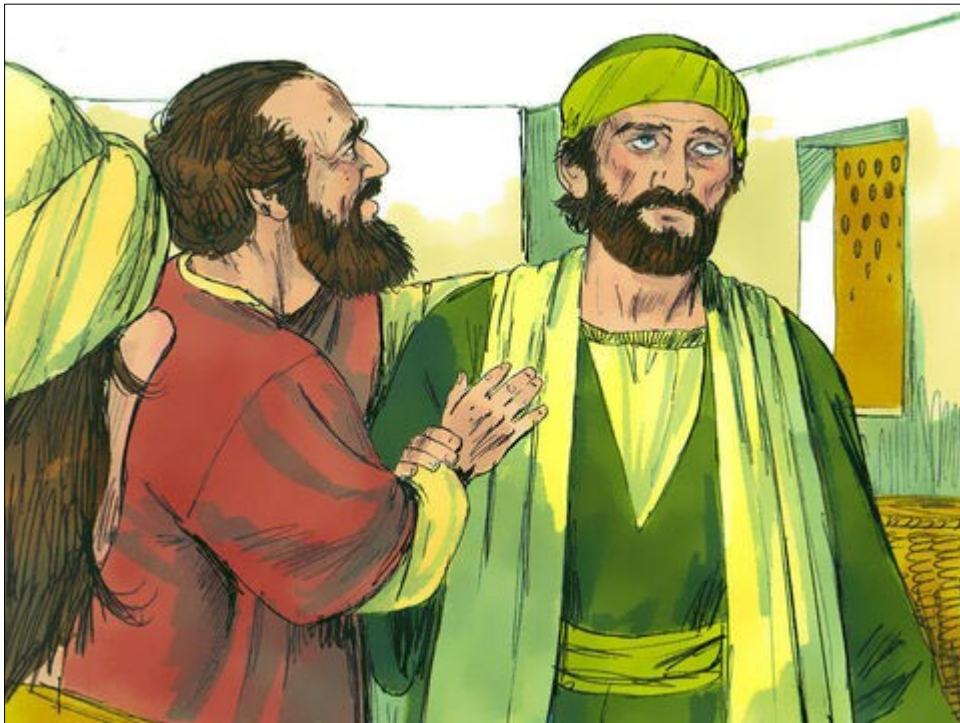
He stood beside me and said, `Brother Saul, receive your sight!`
And at that very moment I was able to see him.



Paul was healed by a miracle.

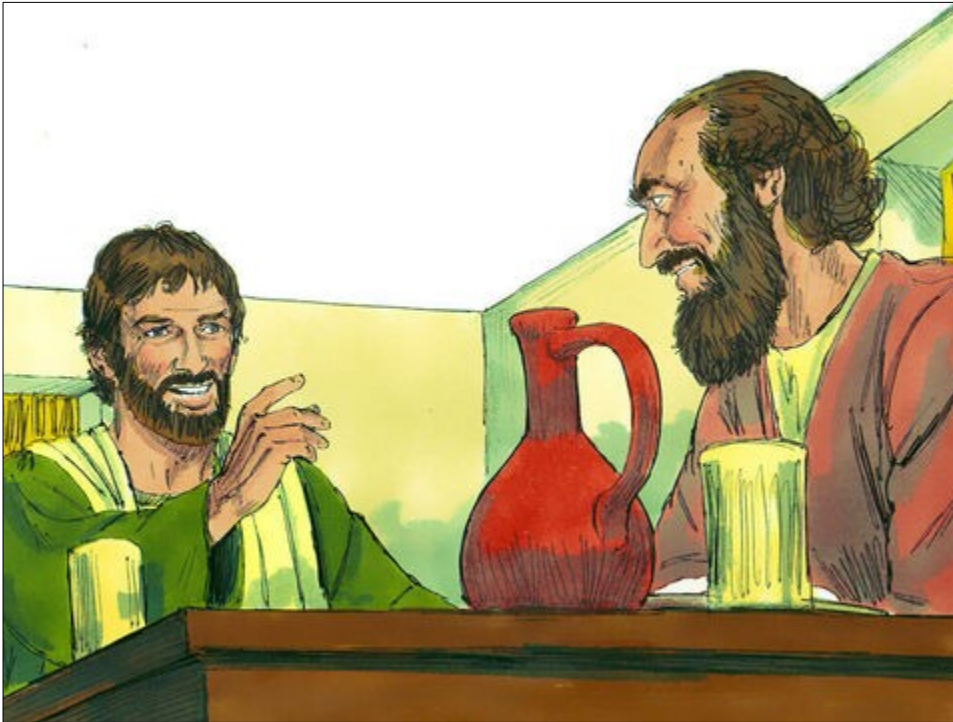
God was at work through this man's help for Paul.

Then he said.. `The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.



Paul describes to the crowd his God-given mission.
The God of Abraham etc.
chose me :-
to know His will
to see the Messiah
to hear him
Appointed as his witness to **all**

And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'



Commitment!

Be baptised
Forgiven by calling on
his Name.

Put your trust in the
Saviour.

Baptism was an outward
act symbolising an
inward cleansing.

This summarises how Paul became a disciple of
Jesus and one of the followers of the 'Way'.

"When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord speaking.



About 20 years later in **Jerusalem**, at the **Temple** as he was praying The Lord revealed himself again.

Divine approval and instructions...

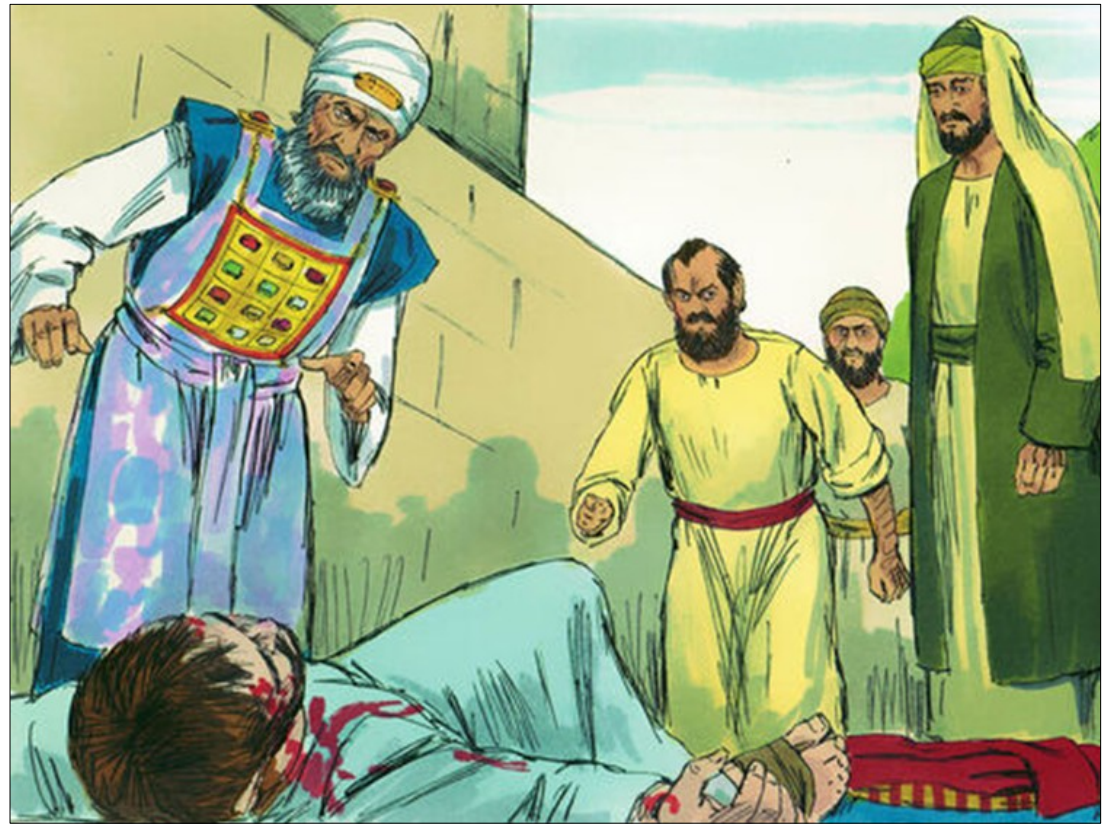
‘Quick!’ he said to me. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’



Paul had to go then (years ago). The authorities had persuaded the people to reject the message. Hopefully things will be different now?

‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these men know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. And when the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’

Paul thinks that they should accept his testimony, because of his background. It should have given greater credibility with the people.

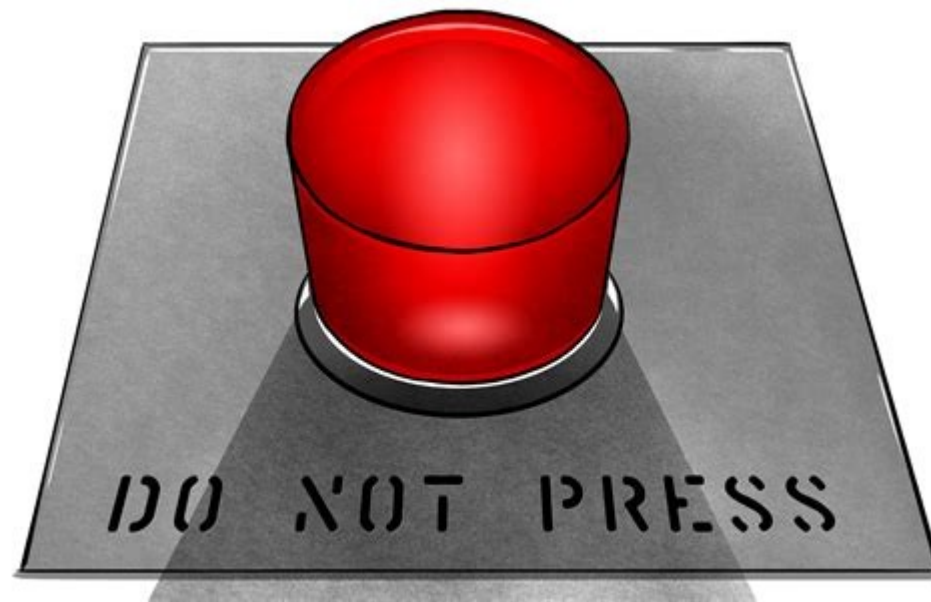


Then the Lord said to me,
‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’

This was Paul’s commission to go to the gentiles.



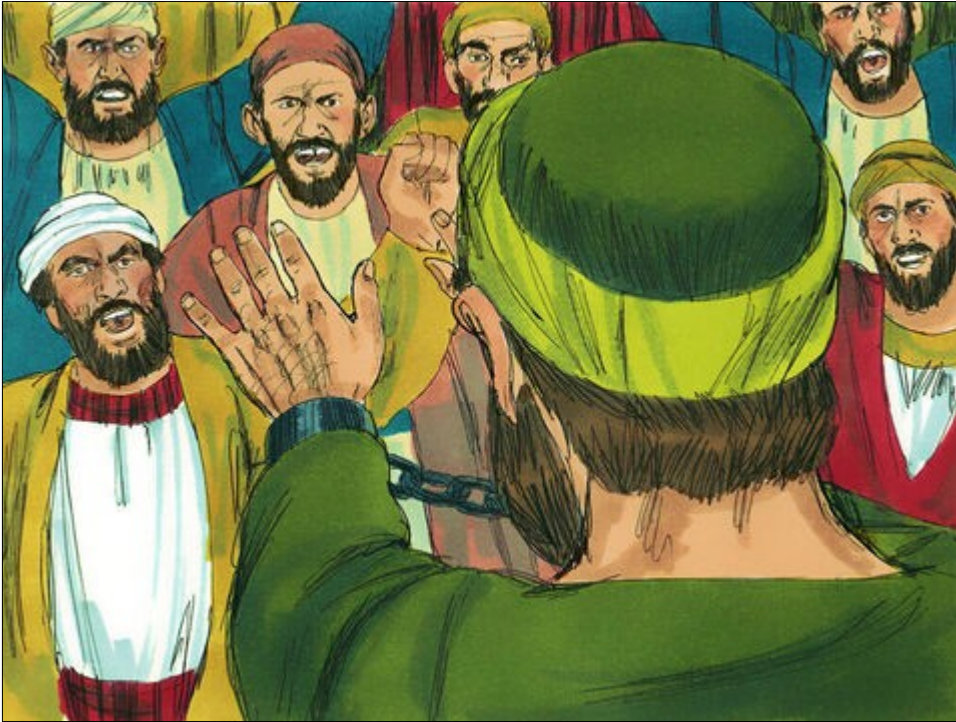
The crowd listened to Paul until he said this.



The word they didn't want to hear.

Silence the messenger!

Then they raised their voices and shouted,
"Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!"



What triggered this violent response?

God had a plan for the gentiles as well as the Jews. It was unthinkable!

These Jews of that day did not have a problem with Gentiles becoming Jews.

But they were incredibly offended at the thought of Gentiles becoming Christians *just as* Jews became Christians, because it implied that Jews and Gentiles were equal, having to come to God on the same terms.

As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, the commander ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks.



This was the end.
They didn't realise it.
The people's rejection would be followed in the next 20 years with the Roman destruction of the Temple and the people of Jerusalem and exile.

the commander ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and questioned in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this.

This was the Roman way of getting at 'the truth' – torture. Still in use today



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?"



Paul rightly appealed to the law for his protection.

Just the right time and question.

Proper laws are meant to represent justice.

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."



He passed on the responsibility in this difficult situation to his boss.

Roman citizens had privileges.

The commander went to Paul and asked, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" "Yes, I am," he answered.



It is important to get the facts.

To lie about citizenship could be a capital offence.

Then the commander said,
"I had to pay a big price for my citizenship."



Citizenship for sale – at a big price

"But I was born a citizen," Paul replied.
Those who were about to question him withdrew immediately.



See God's control of all
the details of his life.

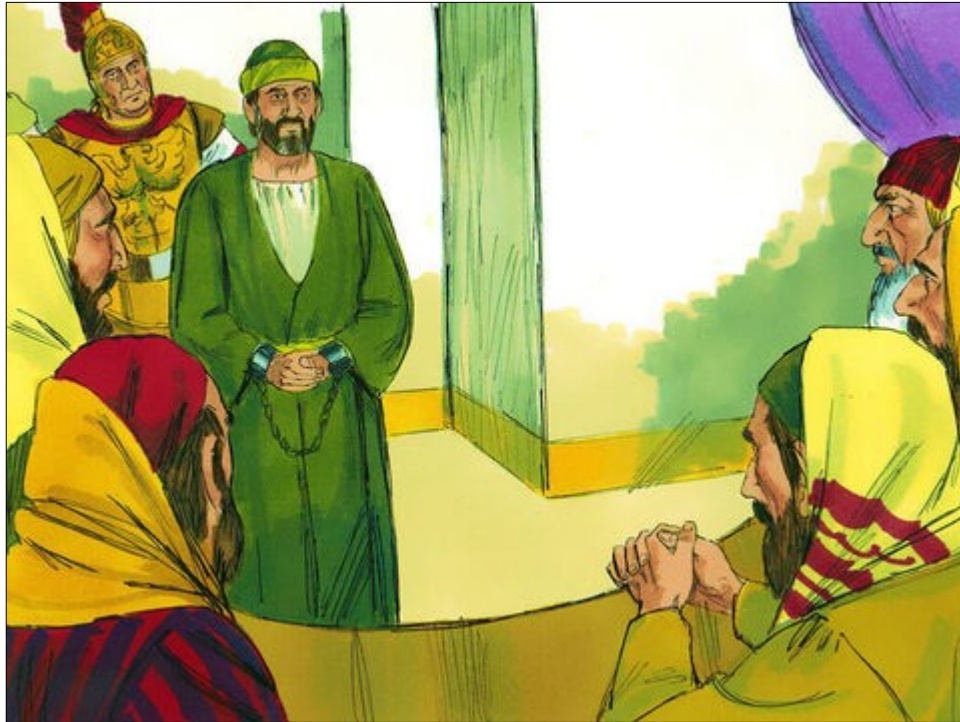
A strategic withdrawal

The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.



If a superior finds out.

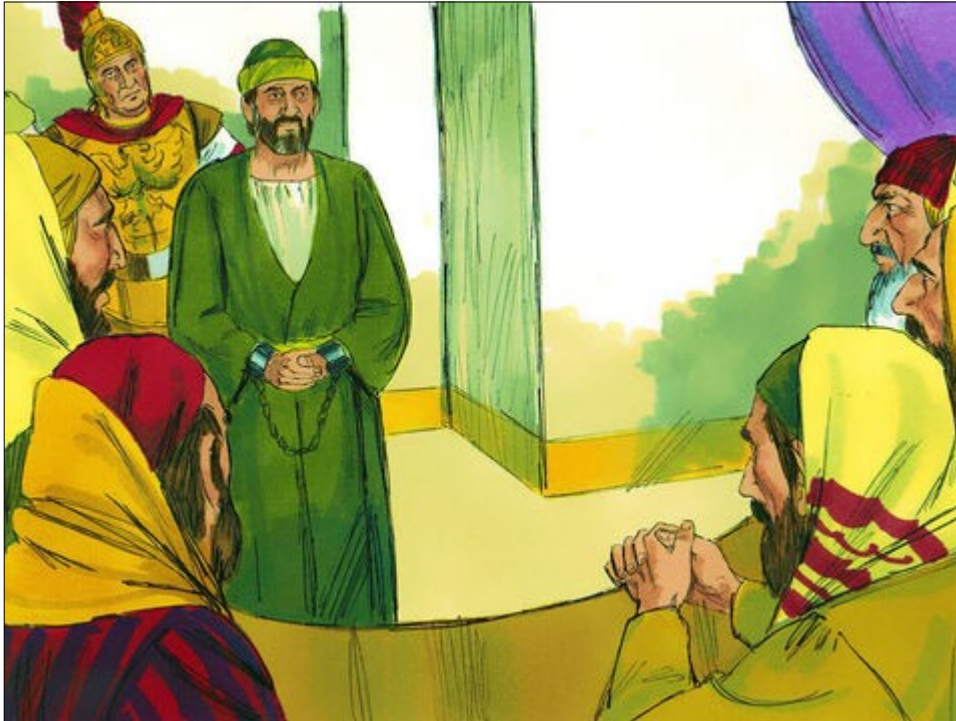
The next day, since the commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble.



Curiosity?

Find out what was going on through the Jewish leaders.

Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.



Question:
Why do people get so
upset about this fellow?

Could this be

Another GOLDEN
OPPORTUNITY

?