

# Crossway Life Group, Week of January 26

See sermon notes on [CMC's webpage](#) for background information

## Community

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*Take time to share and pray for each other's concerns and joys.*

## Scripture: Acts 21:37-22:29. Sermon: "The Unseen Hand of God"

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### Reading & Discussing Scripture

1. **Read Proverbs 12:1.** When do we get corrected? Why might we "hate" correction? Why is hating correction stupid? What is it like to be corrected by God?
2. **Overview.** Paul came to Jerusalem, the center of Judaism. He was bringing a gift of money from Gentile Christians to Jewish Christians, accompanied by several Gentile Christians. Paul was anticipating trouble, that non-Christian Jews would attack him, and that Christian Jews would reject the Gentiles and their gift. The differences and conflict between the Gentiles and Jews intensified in Jerusalem and provided Paul opportunity to live out the reconciling power of the gospel.
3. **Read Acts 21:37-22:5.** When Paul tells the story of God's work in his life he highlights a number of similarities between himself and the crowd. What does he emphasize? Why?
4. **Read Acts 22:6-21.** What supernatural events does Paul highlight in his story? What is different between Paul's understanding of God's will and the plan that God revealed?
5. **Read Acts 22:22-29.** Why does the crowd react violently against Paul? What seems to motivate Paul not to hide the upsetting part of his story?
6. Do you have any other questions about the passage or the sermon?

### The Big Idea

**God is working all things together  
through natural and supernatural means  
in sometimes unexpected ways  
to form His Kingdom of peoples from all nations  
despite intense conflict**

How will we hear God's correction of us?

- 1) Decide that His plan is better than ours: Psalm 16:2
- 2) Ask God to correct us: Psalm 139:23-24
- 3) Pursue a humble heart: Proverbs 12:1
- 4) Listen carefully to the Spirit and follow

### Application & Reflection Questions

7. How might God be correcting you? Sometimes we are opposing God. Sometimes we are ignoring God.
8. How is God using you?
9. What appointed (perhaps new/expanded) role might God have for you in carrying out His plan?

## Growing in Cultural Understanding

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Paul used his cultural similarities with the crowd to build a bridge. How have you done that? Is there a setting in your life where you are trying to do it more?

## Serving beyond ourselves

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*What are ways that your group can be for the benefit of people beyond yourselves?*

Please **pray for our church's nominating committee** as they consider the people who have been recommended by the congregation.

## Acts 21:37 – 22:29 (New International Version)

### Paul speaks to the crowds

<sup>37</sup> As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, “May I say something to you?” “Do you speak Greek?” he replied. <sup>38</sup> “Aren’t you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the wilderness some time ago?” <sup>39</sup> Paul answered, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people.” <sup>40</sup> After receiving the commander’s permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic:

<sup>22:1</sup> “Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.” <sup>2</sup> When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said: <sup>3</sup> “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. <sup>4</sup> I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> “About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. <sup>7</sup> I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’ <sup>8</sup> “‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. “ ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. <sup>9</sup> My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. <sup>10</sup> “‘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.’ <sup>11</sup> My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

<sup>12</sup> “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. <sup>13</sup> He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him. <sup>14</sup> “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. <sup>15</sup> You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup> And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

<sup>17</sup> “When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance <sup>18</sup> and saw the Lord speaking to me. ‘Quick!’ he said. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.’ <sup>19</sup> “‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. <sup>20</sup> 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.’ <sup>21</sup> “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’ ”

### Paul the Roman Citizen

<sup>22</sup> 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!” <sup>23</sup> As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> 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?” <sup>26</sup> 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.” <sup>27</sup> The commander went to Paul and asked, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” “Yes, I am,” he answered. <sup>28</sup> Then the commander said, “I had to pay a lot of money for my citizenship.” “But I was born a citizen,” Paul replied. <sup>29</sup> 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.

## Proverbs 12:1 (New International Version)

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.