

**THE PURSUIT OF NATURAL JUSTICE!**  
**ACTS CH21:27 - 40**

**What does Natural justice mean?**

**“It is easier to believe a lie that one has heard a thousand times than to believe a fact that one has never heard before.”** Robert Lynd (An Irish writer) Is it easier to believe a lie over truth? How much damage can lies do? How do we work out the truth from lies? When accusations are made against someone, what should we do? Ever heard of natural justice? It refers to **the basic fundamental principles of being treated fairly**. These principles include the duty to give someone a fair hearing; the duty to ensure that the matter is decided by someone who is impartial; and the duty to allow an appeal against a decision. In English Law, natural justice is technical terminology for the rule against bias and the right to a fair hearing. While the term natural justice is often retained as a general concept, it has largely been replaced and extended by the general "duty to act fairly". [Wikipedia](#)



**PAUL SEIZED BY THE MOB! v27-30**

John Stott says “So far Luke has portrayed his hero on the offensive, taking bold initiatives under the leading of the Holy Spirit to evangelize most of Asia and Greece. But when Paul arrived in Jerusalem, his whole career abruptly changed. He was assaulted, arrested, bound and brought to trial. He found himself on the defensive. Following his three epic missionary journeys Luke describes the five trials he had to endure. The first was before a Jewish crowd at the Northwest corner of the Temple area (**22:1**), the second before the Supreme Jewish Council in Jerusalem (**23:1**), the third and fourth in Caesarea before Felix and Festus, who succeeded one another as the procurator of Judea (**24:1; 25:1**), and the fifth, also in Caesarea, before King Herod Agrippa 11 (**26:1**).

***These five trials, including in each case Paul's defence speech, together with the circumstances of his arrest (21:18), take up six chapters in our Bibles and nearly 200 verses.” (Cited in John Stott's Commentary on Acts pg 335)***

**V27 – Ch21:17 – 1 day; Ch21:18 – 2 days; Ch21:26 - 27 – 3 days; Ch22:30 – 4 days; Ch23:11 – 5 days; Ch23:12 – 6 days; Ch23:32 – 6 days; Ch24:1 – 7 days; Ch24:11 – 12 days!**

V27 – Jerusalem would have been packed as the Jews were about to celebrate “Feast of Weeks” or “Feast of Pentecost” - Deuteronomy Ch16:9-12, Paul had been planning to be there for Pentecost Acts Ch20:16, not the above mentioned festival but from Acts Ch2:1-4 and the pouring out of God The Holy Spirit! The Jews again are the ones causing trouble for Paul, this time the Asian Jews, pointing to Jews from Ephesus, are lying and exaggerating about Paul!

***Paul and suffering in Acts:***

- Ch13:45 – *Jealous and talking abusively about Paul!* - Antioch Pisidia
- Ch13:50 – *Stirred up persecution for Paul!* - Antioch Pisidia
- Ch14:5 – *Plot afoot to ill-treat Paul!* - Iconium
- Ch14:19 – *They stoned Paul!* - Lystra
- Ch16:22 – *Paul was stripped and beaten!* - Philippi
- Ch16:23 – *Paul was severely flogged!* - Philippi
- Ch18:12 – *Jewish united attack on Paul!* - Corinth
- Ch19:33 – *Jewish spokesperson lying about Paul!* - Ephesus
- Ch20:2 – *Jewish plot to kill Paul!* - Corinth

The Temple building itself was constructed on an elevated platform. Only the High Priest was allowed into the Most Holy Place, once a year on the Day of Atonement. Then there was an inner Court, for the Priests, then an outer Court for the Jewish men, then another Court for the Jewish women, then there was 5 steps leading down to a high wall, and from that wall, there was another 14 steps which led down to another wall, and beyond this wall was the area for the gentiles. If a gentile was caught anywhere inside those walls he would be killed. There were notices on this outside wall, warning gentiles not to enter or they would be killed!

Written in both Greek and Latin equal distance from one another, notices which read “No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the Temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death” (Cited in John Stott, Commentary on Acts – pg344).

***The current lies are:***

1. Teaching everyone everywhere, both Jews and Gentiles
2. Against the Jewish people
3. Against the Jewish Law
4. Against the Jewish Temple
5. And for bringing Greeks into the Temple

V28 – The irony of the lie! Paul is being accused of defiling the Holiness of the Temple area by bringing in a Greek, when Trophimus was Asian, not in the Temple with Paul and ironically Paul was completing a “purification” and that is why he was in the Temple! How ironic!

This is now the end of Paul's freedom to move about to preach and teach the Gospel! Although the remaining chapters show Paul taking every opportunity to testify about Christ, while imprisoned. He is about to be rescued from death, but there is no miraculous release from captivity like those in Ch5:17-21, Ch12:1-17 of Ch16:25-30!

**PAUL SEIZED BY THE ROMANS! V31-36**

This is now the 3<sup>rd</sup> time where Luke records for us – Jewish injustice and Roman justice so that the Gospel is protected (Ch13:4-12; Ch18:12-17 and here!)! The Commander of the Roman Cohort in Jerusalem, named in Ch23:26 as Claudius Lysias, becomes a key player in the events from this point until Paul's safe delivery into the hands of the provincial governor in Caesarea in Ch23:31-35.

The Garrison in Jerusalem was a cohort, normally consisting of 760 infantry and 240 cavalry commanded by a “***tribunus militum***” an officer similar to a rank of a Major or Colonel. He is

concerned with justice v34 + v40, keeping the Law, or what we would call “Natural Justice.” ***The Bible has a lot to say about this matter, for example – the need for 2-3 witnesses Deuteronomy Ch17:1-13, or the instructions from Moses on how to deal with accusations in Deuteronomy Ch19:15-21, or the process laid down by Paul in responding to accusations against elders in 1<sup>st</sup> Tim Ch5:19-20, or indeed in dealing with sin amongst Christians in Matthew Ch18:15-35.*** There is no justice being carried out by the mob, leaving Paul so badly beaten by the mob v32 + v35 that the soldiers have to carry him and apart from their intervention, Paul would have surely been killed!

***V34 – The Tribune/Commander of the cohort, around a 1000 soldiers, believes in natural justice and wants to establish the facts, but because of the confused mob, he is unable to do so, and so protects Paul’s very life!***

V36 - Just like the crowd shouted ***“Away with Him”*** in Luke Ch23:18 towards Jesus, a crowd, shouts the same for the apostle Paul! Luke continues with the similarities between Jesus and Paul:

1. Jesus travelled to Jerusalem with His disciples – Luke Ch10:38, Paul travels with disciples Ch20:4!
2. Jesus was opposed by hostile Jews - Luke Ch6:7, Ch11:53-54, Ch22:1-2, Paul is opposed by hostile Jews Ch20:3!
3. Jesus made 3 successive predictions of His sufferings - Luke Ch9:22, Ch9:44, Ch18:31-32, Paul does likewise Ch20:22-23, Ch21:4 and Ch21:11!
4. Jesus declared His readiness to lay down His life - Luke Ch12:50, Ch22:19, Ch23:46, Paul does also Ch20:24 and Ch21:13!
5. Jesus was committed to completing His mission - Luke Ch9:51, so too is Paul Ch20:24 and Ch21:13!
6. Jesus expressed His abandonment to the Will of God - Luke Ch22:42, the same is of Paul Ch21:14!

### **PAUL SEIZES THEM BOTH! V37-40**

Notice the information that Paul gives in v39 , his ethnicity, his place of birth, why? People in antiquity were judged by the importance of the place where they were born: their own personal honour and dignity was in part derived from the honour rating of the place from which they came. Tarsus was prominent in the first century because of its political, economic and intellectual life.

Once the Tribune/Commander hears the information given by Paul, he is happy to let him speak! Again demonstrating the integrity of the Tribune/Commander pursuing natural justice!

### **APPLICATION**

What was your understanding of “Natural Justice” before today?

Can you see how God used the Roman Commander to save Paul's life?

We have a Safeguarding Policy to ensure **ALL** are kept safe at The Mission Church.

Do you know about our Safeguarding Policy?

Have you seen a copy and do you know who to talk to about Safeguarding issues?

Have you seen Section 14 of our Safeguarding Policy?