

1st DEFENCE – RELIABLE WITNESSES!
ACTS CH22:1 - 21

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'S CREDENTIALS! v1-5

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)

Paul wants to establish his thoroughly Jewish background. Paul's 1st defence speech begins as Deacon Steve's did back in Ch7:2 - "Brothers and fathers", showing appropriate levels of respect and warmth, as the crowd would have been predominantly Jewish! Paul addresses them in Hebrew and as such the crowd become even more quiet.

Just like the Roman Tribune, Claudius Lysias (Ch23:26), Paul also believes in Natural Justice and as such highlights reliable witnesses! Paul explains that he was born a Jew and had a Jewish upbringing, studying under one of their most respected teachers, Gamaliel, who was also a member of the Jewish Council the Sanhedrin and who had earlier advised the Council concerning the Christians (Ch5:34-39). Paul is about to bring to light reliable witnesses who could be called to give evidence if needed:

1. v3 Gamaliel – a Pharisee, educator and member of the Sanhedrin
2. v5 the High Priest
3. v5 the whole Council of the Elders (Sanhedrin – 70 men)
4. v5 copies of letters of authority to pursue, arrest, bound, and authorise sentencing!

At this point, the crowd would have loved what they were hearing!!! Paul, the man they had been beating (Ch21:27, 31, 32, + 35) they are now told was Jew, educated by one of their own – Gamaliel, a Pharisee, member of the Sanhedrin, that Paul was zealous for God, had been granted authority by the High Priest and Elders, to pursue, arrest, bound and take part in authorising the Christians death!

However!

PAUL'S CONVERSION! V6-16

Paul now continues to be a reliable witness himself, by describing what happened to him on the road to Damascus (Ch9:1-18, Ch26:13-18), placing an emphasis on certain things, knowing that this will be the most effective way of communicating to his Jewish audience:

1. v6 – noon and a great light from heaven
2. v7 – a voice speaking to me
3. v8 – Jesus of Nazareth speaking to me
4. v11 – blinded
5. v12 – Ananias, devout Jew, well spoken of by all the Jews
6. v13 – I received my sight as Ananias spoke, confirming that God had spoken
7. v14 – chosen by God and seeing Jesus
8. v15 – called to be God's witness
9. v16 – baptised

At this point, there is real irony as Paul had only just been accused of defiling the Holiness of the Temple v28, when he was completing "purification" and is telling the whole truth about his life! But the Ephesian Jews, and mob are the ones defiling the Temple with their lies and actions! How ironic! Paul is recalling his Divine encounter with Christ!

What a story!

PAUL'S COMMISSION! V17-21

On his return to Jerusalem, 3 years after his conversion (Acts Ch9:26-30; Gal Ch1:18-21; 2nd Cor Ch11:30-32), the Jewish theme continues with a visit to the Temple and a vision from Jesus, just like:

1. Samuel - 1st Samuel Ch3:1-18
2. Isaiah - Isaiah Ch6:1-6
3. Simeon - Luke Ch2:30-32
4. Peter - Acts Ch3:25

Paul explains what happened to him whilst back in Jerusalem for the first time since he was saved, and how he received a vision from Jesus. How Jesus testified about the Jews, and how they would not accept Paul's testimony. Jesus instructs Paul to leave and to go to the Gentiles who are "far away" on two counts:

1. Far from God
2. Far in distance

Paul also recalls the witness (carrying on with the theme of witnesses) of Deacon Steve, God's witness, who was murdered by the Jews, with Paul standing by, giving the order! How great is the grace of God! How many of us have lived such shameful and evil lives, before knowing Christ, but now have the delight, perhaps like John Newton, who wrote the hymn "Amazing Grace" in singing God's praises!

APPLICATION

Paul's upbringing was important to him. What does this imply for:

1. Christian parents?
2. Children's work within Church?
3. Child evangelism?

How difficult was Paul's past, what does this show about God's willingness to forgive?