

**The Inscrutable Question: Passages Documenting Paul's Fall; Paul Asserts the Privileges of His Roman Citizenship, Acts 22:27-28**

79. Observing all this was Tribune Claudius who decided that things were about to get out of hand. He had Paul taken into the barracks and determined to get to the bottom of the controversy by scourging Paul until he confessed his wrongdoing.
80. In Roman law a Roman citizen may not be scourged therefore Paul realized that the Tribune was unaware of his citizenship. He told the centurion who was preparing to scourge him of this and the centurion told Claudius.

**Acts 22:27 -** Tribune Claudius came and said to Paul, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" And Paul said, "Yes."

**v 28 -** And the tribune answered, I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born a citizen."

**v 29 -** Therefore, those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains.

**Privileges of Roman Citizenship**

- 1-Roman citizens were exempt from examination under torture.
- 2-When Octavius became the Roman Empire's first emperor he was known as Augustus.
- 3-Octavius, or Augustus, issued the Edicts of Augustus, which confirmed and amplified earlier laws.
- 4-These laws required that in a trial of a Roman citizen the following procedure must be followed:
  - 1) An indictment of charges and penalties.
  - 2) A formal accusation
  - 3) A hearing before a Roman official and his advisors.
- 5-Two questions have arisen in our study that come into view again in this passage: (1) how did one become a Roman citizen and (2) when apprehended by the law, how did one prove his citizenship?
- 6-First of all, citizenship could be acquired in several ways:
  - 1) By birth to parents who were Roman citizens.
  - 2) Legislative extension, e.g., the emperor granting citizenship to certain provinces.
  - 3) Twenty-five years of service in the Roman army.
  - 4) Manumission from slavery; the ceremony called *vindicta*, where the slave was touched by the lictor's rod.
  - 5) Purchase, i.e., one could buy his citizenship.
  - 6) Granted to those who performed some special service to the empire.
  - 7) One could be adopted by a Roman citizen.
- 7-Proof of citizenship includes:
  - 1) A new citizen received a *diploma civitas Romanae*: The Document of Roman Citizenship, which conferred the privileges of citizenship.

- 2) Next his name was recorded on one of the 35 tribal lists at Rome as well as the local municipal register.
  - 3) Succeeding generations of a citizen's family possessed a *professio*, a registration of birth, which recorded his citizenship status.
  - 4) The *toga* was the official dress of the Roman citizen although it was worn only on special occasions. Non-Romans could not wear the *toga*.
  - 5) Papers, which validated a person's citizenship were kept in the family archives and were not usually carried on one's person.
  - 6) Consequently, the verbal claim of Roman citizenship was accepted at face value.
  - 7) The penalty for falsifying documents or making false claims of citizenship was exceedingly stiff.
  - 8) Epictetus's *Discourses* and Suetonius's *Lives of the Caesars* indicate that suspects caught falsely claiming Roman citizenship were put to death.
  - 9) Consequently, when a prisoner claimed Roman citizenship it was generally accepted as fact since the validity of the claim would come to light in the legal process.
  - 10) Since Paul was a Roman citizen, before charges could be sent to Rome, the commander had to know the nature of the charges against him.
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81. Tribune Claudius, wishing for the Jews to resolve what appeared to him to be a Jewish problem, released Paul to the Sanhedrin so it could conduct an internal investigation.
  82. Again Paul appears before a Jewish audience, this time the highest ruling body in Judaism. This is no unusual environment for Paul for prior to his conversion he was himself a Pharisee and an expert on the Mosaic Law that this body enforced.