



Lesson 35 – Paul a Prisoner

Based on Acts 21:17-Acts 23:35

Paul had just returned from his 3rd missionary journey. Many along the way home were prophesying that he would end up in chains when he returned to Jerusalem. He, unafraid, faced head-on, the perils of life and was willing to follow the direction of the LORD no matter the circumstances.

- 1) What did Paul do when he got into Jerusalem?

Acts 21:17-19 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us _____. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the _____ were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the _____ by his ministry.

- 2) What was their reply?

Acts 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

On this occasion, Paul and his companions formally presented to the leaders of the work at Jerusalem the contributions forwarded by the Gentile churches for the support of the poor among their Jewish brethren. The gathering of these contributions had cost the apostle and his fellow workers much time, anxious thought, and wearisome labor. The sum, which far exceeded the expectations of the elders at Jerusalem, represented many sacrifices and even severe privations on the part of the Gentile believers.

They felt that the methods of labor pursued by the apostle bore the signet of Heaven. The liberal contributions lying before them added weight to the testimony of the apostle concerning the faithfulness of the new churches established among the Gentiles. The men who, while numbered among those who were in charge of the work at Jerusalem, had urged that arbitrary measures of control be adopted, saw Paul's ministry in a new light and were convinced that their own course had been wrong,

- 3) What were some of the rumors about Paul circulating about?

Acts 21:21-22 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

- 4) What suggestion did they make to possibly allay some of the fears about him?

Acts 21:23-24 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a _____ on them; Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may _____ their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest _____, and keepest the _____.

The brethren hoped that Paul, by following the course suggested, might give a decisive contradiction to the false reports concerning him. They assured him that the decision of the former council concerning the Gentile converts and the ceremonial law, still held good. But the advice now given was not consistent with that decision. The Spirit of God did not prompt this instruction; it was the fruit of cowardice.

Paul realized that so long as many of the leading members of the church in Jerusalem should continue to cherish prejudice against him, they would work constantly to counteract his influence. He felt that if by any reasonable concession he could win them to the truth he would remove a great obstacle to the success of the gospel in other places. But he was not authorized of God to concede as much as they asked.



5) What did Paul do?

Acts 21:26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day _____ himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an _____ should be offered for every one of them.

Those who advised Paul to take this step had not fully considered the great peril to which he would thus be exposed. During this season, Jerusalem was filled with worshipers from many lands. As, in fulfillment of the commission given him by God, Paul had borne the gospel to the Gentiles, he had visited many of the world's largest cities, and he was well known to thousands who from foreign parts had come to Jerusalem to attend the feast. Among these were men whose hearts were filled with bitter hatred for Paul, and for him to enter the temple on a public occasion was to risk his life.

6) What happened?

Acts 21:27-28 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, _____ up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where _____ the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath _____ this holy place.

By the Jewish law it was a crime punishable with death for an uncircumcised person to enter the inner courts of the sacred edifice. Paul had been seen in the city in company with Trophimus, an Ephesian, and it was conjectured that he had brought him into the temple. This he had not done; and being himself a Jew, his act in entering the temple was no violation of the law.

7) How bad did things get?

Acts 21:30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and _____ him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

Acts 21:31-32 And as they went about to _____ him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left _____ of Paul.

8) Whom did the roman soldiers assume he was?

Acts 21:38 Art not thou that _____, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

9) What did they do with him?

Acts 21:33-35 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be _____ with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the _____, he commanded him to be _____ into the castle. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

In the midst of the tumult the apostle was calm and self-possessed. His mind was stayed upon God, and he knew that angels of heaven were about him. He felt unwilling to leave the temple without making an effort to set the truth before his countrymen.

10) What request did he make?

Acts 21:37,39 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou _____ Greek?... ...But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of _____, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.



11) What happened next?

Acts 21:40, 22:1-2 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and _____ with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying, Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my _____ which I make now unto you. (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more _____: and he saith,)

12) What did he say?

Acts 22:3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of _____, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

None could deny the apostle's statements, as the facts that he referred to were well known to many who were still living in Jerusalem. He then spoke of his former zeal in persecuting the disciples of Christ, even unto death; and he narrated the circumstances of his conversion, telling his hearers how his own proud heart had been led to bow to the crucified Nazarene.

13) After giving his testimony, he told them of his commission, what was it?

Acts 22:21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the _____.

14) Did they receive the message with joy?

Acts 22:22-23 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, _____ with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw _____ into the air,

Hitherto the people had listened with close attention, but when Paul reached the point in his history where he was appointed Christ's ambassador to the Gentiles, their fury broke forth anew. Accustomed to look upon themselves as the only people favored by God, they were unwilling to permit the despised Gentiles to share the privileges which had hitherto been regarded as exclusively their own.

15) How did the Roman Soldiers react to the new tumult?

Acts 22:24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the _____, and bade that he should be examined by _____; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

16) How did Paul react?

Acts 22:25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a _____, and uncondemned? When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

17) What followed?

Acts 22:26-29 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take _____ what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was _____ born. Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had _____ him.

18) What did they do for Paul after that?

Acts 22:30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he _____ him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

The apostle was now to be tried by the same tribunal of which he himself had been a member before his conversion. As he stood before the Jewish rulers, his bearing was calm, and his countenance revealed the peace of Christ.



19) How well did things go?

Acts 23:1-2 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good _____ before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to _____ him on the mouth.

Acts 23:3-4 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou _____ wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high _____?

Acts 23:5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak _____ of the ruler of thy people.

20) Paul understood the council better than most, what did he say to them?

Acts 23:6-7 But when Paul perceived that the one part were _____, and the other _____, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was _____.

21) What became of that?

Acts 23:9-10 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find _____ in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in _____ of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

Later, while reflecting on the trying experiences of the day, Paul began to fear that his course might not have been pleasing to God. Could it be that he had made a mistake after all in visiting Jerusalem? Had his great desire to be in union with his brethren led to this disastrous result?

The cause of Christ was very near to Paul's heart, and with deep anxiety he thought of the perils of the scattered churches, exposed as they were to the persecutions of just such men as he had encountered in the Sanhedrin council. In distress and discouragement, he wept and prayed.

22) How did God answer his prayers?

Acts 23:11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at _____.

Paul had long looked forward to visiting Rome; he greatly desired to witness for Christ there but had felt that his purposes were frustrated by the enmity of the Jews. He little thought, even now, that it would be as a prisoner that he would go.

23) What were the Jews outside planning?

Acts 23:12-14 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a _____, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this _____. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have _____ Paul.

24) Does God love a fast like this?

Isaiah 58:4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not _____ as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

Instead of rebuking this cruel scheme, the priests and rulers eagerly agreed to it. Paul had spoken the truth when he compared Ananias to a whited sepulcher.



25) Who helped Paul?

Acts 23:16-17 And when Paul's sister's _____ heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief _____: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

26) What did the youth tell the chief captain?

Acts 23:20-21 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would _____ somewhat of him more perfectly. But do not thou yield unto them: for there _____ in _____ for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

As a people, the Jews were in a state of excitement and irritation, and tumults were of frequent occurrence. The continued presence of the apostle in Jerusalem might lead to dangerous consequences to the city and even to the commandant himself.

27) What did he command?

Acts 23:23-24 And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two _____ soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him _____ unto Felix the governor.

28) Paul was sent to Felix in Caesarea, how did Felix respond?

Acts 23:35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine _____ are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

The case of Paul was not the first in which a servant of God had found among the heathen an asylum from the malice of the professed people of Jehovah. In their rage against Paul the Jews had added another crime to the dark catalogue which marked the history of that people. They had still further hardened their hearts against the truth and had rendered their doom more certain.

Satan is constantly working through his agents to dishearten and destroy those whom God has chosen to accomplish a great and good work. They may be ready to sacrifice even life itself for the advancement of the cause of Christ, yet the great deceiver will suggest to their brethren doubts concerning them which, if entertained, would undermine confidence in their integrity of character, and thus cripple their usefulness.

Can you see Paul would do anything for Jesus?

Would you like to have the courage that Paul had?

When is the time to do the right thing?