

and went to the fortress and told Paul. ¹⁷ Paul called for one of the Roman officers and said, "Take this young man to the commander. He has something important to tell him."

¹⁸ So the officer did, explaining, "Paul, the prisoner, called me over and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you."

¹⁹ The commander took his hand, led him aside, and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?"

²⁰ Paul's nephew told him, "Some Jews are going to ask you to bring Paul before the high council tomorrow, pretending they want to get some more information. ²¹ But don't do it! There are more than forty men hiding along the way ready to ambush him. They have vowed not to eat or drink anything until they have killed him. They are ready now, just waiting for your consent."

²² "Don't let anyone know you told me this," the commander warned the young man.

²³ Then the commander called two of his officers and ordered, "Get 200 soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea at nine o'clock tonight. Also take 200 spearmen and 70 mounted troops. ²⁴ Provide horses for Paul to ride, and get him safely to Governor Felix."

7. Discussion: (a) According to this story, what is the risk of making a vow that might be contrary to God's will? (b) What does the role of Paul's nephew show us about God's plan to use children? (c) More than 40 men must have failed to keep their vow. How long do you think they went without eating or drinking? (d) Caesarea is a port city where boats often leave on their way to Greece and Rome. About that time, what do you imagine Paul was thinking about the meaning of what the Lord had told him? (Page 3)

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An Interactive Life Application Bible Study of the Acts of the Apostles for Small Groups

Key: Blue = New Testament Red = Words of Jesus

Green = Old Testament Quotes

Lesson 29

1. Background: In Lesson 28 Paul arrived in Jerusalem from his missionary journey. Some men stirred up trouble by falsely accusing Paul of speaking against the Temple and telling people everywhere to disobey Jewish laws. They also accused him of defiling the Temple by bringing Gentiles into it. But Paul was able to persuade the Roman commander to let him speak to the riotous crowd. Then he told the story of how God had transformed him from a persecutor of the followers of Jesus to become a believer and a messenger of the Good News. He explained that Jesus had said to him, "Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!"

Acts 22:22-23

The crowd listened until Paul said that word. Then they all began to shout, "Away with such a fellow! He isn't fit to live!" ²³ They yelled, threw off their coats, and tossed handfuls of dust into the air.

2. Paul Reveals His Roman Citizenship

Acts 22:24-29

The commander brought Paul inside and ordered him lashed with whips to make him confess his crime. He wanted to find out why the crowd had become so furious. ²⁵ When they tied Paul down to lash him, Paul said to the officer standing there, "Is it legal for you to whip a Roman citizen who hasn't even been tried?"

²⁶ When the officer heard this, he went to the commander and asked, "What are you doing? This man is a Roman citizen!"

²⁷ So the commander went over and asked Paul, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?"

"Yes, I certainly am," Paul replied.

²⁸ "I am, too," the commander muttered, "and it cost me plenty!"

Paul answered, "But I am a citizen by birth!"

²⁹ The soldiers who were about to interrogate Paul quickly withdrew when they heard he was a Roman citizen, and the commander was frightened because he had ordered him bound and whipped.

3. Discussion: What does this event in Paul's life tell us about how important it is for Christians to know and exercise their rights as citizens? However, what should our response be regarding Christians in parts of the world, where they have no rights when faced with persecution?

4. Paul before the High Council

Acts 22:30 The next day the commander ordered the leading priests into session with the Jewish high council. He wanted to find out what the trouble was all about, so he released Paul to have him stand before them.

Acts 23:1 Gazing intently at the high council, Paul began: "Brothers, I have always lived before God with a clear conscience!"

² Instantly Ananias the high priest commanded those close to Paul to slap him on the mouth. ³ But Paul said to him, "God will slap you, you corrupt hypocrite! What kind of judge are you to break the law yourself by ordering me struck like that?" [Note: the Law says: Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality. . . but judge fairly." (Leviticus 19:15)]

⁴ Those standing near Paul said to him, "Do you dare to insult God's high priest?"

⁵ "I'm sorry, brothers. I didn't realize he was the high priest," Paul replied, "for the Scriptures say, 'You must not speak evil of any of your rulers.'" (Exodus 22:28)

[Perhaps evidence that Paul was afflicted with poor eye sight.]

⁶ Paul realized that some members of the high council were Sadducees and some were Pharisees, so he shouted, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, as were my ancestors! And I

am on trial because my hope is in the resurrection of the dead!"

⁷ This divided the council—the Pharisees against the Sadducees—⁸ for the Sadducees say there is no resurrection or angels or spirits, but the Pharisees believe in all of these. ⁹ So there was a great uproar. Some of the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees jumped up and began to argue forcefully. "We see nothing wrong with him," they shouted. "Perhaps a spirit or an angel spoke to him." ¹⁰ As the conflict grew more violent, the commander was afraid they would tear Paul apart. So he ordered his soldiers to go and rescue him by force and take him back to the fortress.

¹¹ That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well."

5. Discussion: (a) How would you explain the high priest's response to Paul's claim to a clear conscience? (b) Based upon Paul's example, how far should followers of Jesus go in defending themselves? (c) How did Paul come up with the right question to divide the council against each other? (d) After facing the high council, why do you think the Lord chose that time to appear to Paul and speak to him?

6. The Plan to Kill Paul

23:12 The next morning a group of Jews got together and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³ There were more than forty of them in the conspiracy. ¹⁴ They went to the leading priests and elders and told them, "We have bound ourselves with an oath to eat nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ So you and the high council should ask the commander to bring Paul back to the council again. Pretend you want to examine his case more fully. We will kill him on the way."

¹⁶ But Paul's nephew— his sister's son—heard of their plan