

# (Through the Bible) Acts 22-23

by Chuck Smith

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*In this sermon, Chuck Smith explores Paul's dramatic defense of his faith and the significance of following God's guidance step by step.*

**Duration:** 1:25:54

**Scripture:** Acts 8:26, Acts 9:6

**Topics:** "Faith And Trust", "Gods Will"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses a moment in the life of Paul where he had a strong desire to preach to a particular group of people. However, when he finally got the opportunity, it ended in disaster as he fumbled the ball, so to speak. Paul was discouraged and dejected, but in that moment, the Lord came and encouraged him to be of good cheer. The speaker also highlights the importance of taking orders from the Lord one step at a time, even if we don't have all the details, and emphasizes the need to trust in God's will.

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## Transcript

So we turn in our Bibles now to the 22nd chapter of Acts. Pick up on Paul where we left him last week in that very dramatic moment. Paul, in spite of repeated warnings from the Holy Spirit, has returned to Jerusalem where he has received a very cool reception from the church and a very stern reception by the Jews for while he was in the temple, minding his own business, not doing anything to disturb anyone, going through the rite of purification according to the Jewish law in order that he might celebrate the Passover, not the Passover, but the Feast of Pentecost that year.

Some of the Jews from Asia, when they saw him there, were incensed because they had been following Paul all over Asia trying to undo the work that he was doing among the Gentiles. And they began to cry out, men and brethren, this is that fellow we've been telling you about who among all of the Gentiles has been preaching salvation and all. And so the Jews grabbed hold of Paul and were endeavoring to beat him to death.

And someone reported to the Roman guard up at the Antonio Fortress that there was a ruckus going on down on the Temple Mount. And the Antonio Fortress was actually a part of the Temple Mount area. It was at the northwest corner of the Temple Mount area.

Steps came right down to the Temple Mount. And during the feast, they always had extra soldiers there because that was the time when people's emotions were apt to become inflamed and the time of rebellion against Rome. So they always brought in extra soldiers at that time.

And so a captain of the guard with some of the soldiers came running from the Antonio Fortress down onto the Temple Mount where they by force took Paul from the angry mob who were endeavoring to beat him to death. They bound him with two chains and brought him back to the steps of the Antonio Fortress. And as they were going up the steps, Paul said to the captain of the guard, would you grant me permission to speak to these people? He was surprised that Paul spoke in Greek to him.

And he said, do you speak Greek? Aren't you that Egyptian that led a rebellion here a while back? Paul said, no. He said, I'm a citizen of Tarsus, an important city. So he said, well, go ahead and speak.

So Paul beckoned with his hand to the angry mob of Jews that had followed them on up to the Antonio Fortress and standing there on the porch, he began to address the Jews. This was something that Paul had been longing to do ever since he found Jesus Christ. Paul felt that having an understanding of the Jew, being one, understanding their zeal, understanding their desire to persecute Jesus Christ, he felt sure that he could convince them of the truth of Jesus Christ.

And so this was Paul's great moment. The moment he had been looking forward to, the moment that he had been pushing and pressing. I think that it is possible for us to just push our way into situations that the Lord hasn't necessarily called us into.

There are some people who just have that kind of a tendency to just push themselves in to what they desire. I'm going to get there, you know, no matter what it costs, I'm going to do it. And so Paul is here.

I don't know if he's here by the will of God or here by the will of Paul at this point. When Paul was on his way back to Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit was warning him not to go every place he would stop. He said to the elders at Ephesus, I don't know what awaits me, except I know everywhere I go, the Holy Spirit warns me that there are bonds and afflictions waiting me there.

And when he came to the city of Tyre and met together with the church, there was a word of prophecy and the Spirit again told Paul, don't go to Jerusalem. When he came to the house of Philip in Caesarea, Agabus, the prophet, came down from Jerusalem, one of the recognized prophets in the church in Jerusalem, took Paul's girdle and tied himself up and said, so is the man to be bound who owns this girdle when he gets to Jerusalem. And so they were trying to dissuade Paul from going, but he was determined.

It would seem that perhaps even the Holy Spirit was seeking to dissuade Paul. I could not say for sure it would be presumptuous of me to say, well, it wasn't God's will that he go to Jerusalem, but at least there is that possibility to consider. It is always a sad thing when my will is in conflict with God's will.

It's even sadder when I push my own will over God's. Paul is standing there though. This is his desire.

This is his lifelong ambition, that is Christian lifelong. And so we left him last week beckoning with his hand to the people and a great silence coming over the people and him beginning now to speak to them in their Hebrew tongue. To the captain, he spoke in Greek.

Now to the people, he's going to speak to them in their Hebrew tongue. Chapter 22 begins Paul's impassioned plea to his brethren, men, brethren, and fathers. Hear my defense.

The word defense in the Greek is apologia. And that is why the Christian, the argument for the Christian faith is often called apologetics. It comes from this particular word and you've heard of apologetics.

It has its origin in this Greek word apologia that is used here, translated here defense, which I make unto you. And when they heard that he was speaking in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept even more silent. And he said, I am verily a man which am a Jew, but I was born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia.

Yet I was brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel. Gamaliel was one of the highly respected Jewish rabbis of that day. In fact, probably the most highly respected Jewish rabbi of that day.

The scripture mentions Gamaliel on one other occasion. And that is when in the early church history, they were seeking to silence the witness of the apostles. And Gamaliel stood up and he said, now let's be careful what we do.

You know, there have been other sects arise and they dissipated at the death of their leader. Now that this leader is dead, it's apt to dissipate. So I suggest that we just let it alone.

For if it is not of God, it'll just disappear. If it is of God, then we would find ourselves to be fighting against God. And so that sagacious advice by Gamaliel was followed by the Sanhedrin, which gave the church a bit more toleration in the proclaiming of their message in its very early history.

Gamaliel has written concerning Paul as a student. And Gamaliel said of Paul that he had only one difficulty with him as a student. And that was keeping him supplied with enough books.

That Paul was just a real bookworm of sorts. And as a student was an avid reader. And so Gamaliel's only problem was keeping him supplied with the books.

And so Paul here speaks of his early training at the feet of Gamaliel. And I was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of our fathers and was zealous towards God as ye all are this day. You see, Paul is seeking to identify with them and letting them identify with him.

Amen, brethren. I know what it's all about. I know you're zeal for God.

I was just in the same place you are. I'm a Jew. I sat at the feet of Gamaliel and I persecuted this way unto the death of those who walked in this way.

I persecuted them to death, binding and delivering them into prisons, both men and women. And also the high priest doth bear me witness and all of the estate of the elders from whom also I received letters unto the brethren. And I went to Damascus to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem to be punished.

And it came to pass that as I made my journey and was come near to Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me and I fell to the ground and I heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. In another accounting of this, it said that they did not hear the voice.

And people then imagine a discrepancy in the Bible. There are a couple of Greek words employed. One is phonay, which is the phonetics which is used here.

They did not hear the phonay. That is, they did not, they heard the sound of the voice, but they didn't hear the phonetics. They didn't hear the words.

They did not understand what the voice was saying to Paul. And that is what is being declared here. They heard the sound of the voice, but did not understand the voice that spoke to Paul.

And I said, what shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, arise and go into Damascus and there it shall be told thee of all of the things which are appointed for thee to do. I think that here we have an interesting point that we should bring out again as far as the leading of God in our lives. And that is that God usually leads us just one step at a time.

We brought this out when we were in the earlier part of the book of Acts, when Philip was in Samaria holding a successful revival. And the Spirit said unto him, go down to Gaza, which is desert. Didn't give him any further instructions until he got to Gaza.

And then the Lord gave him the next step. We so often want God to spell out the whole thing. We're not willing to walk by faith.

We want God to spell out the entire mission, tell us everything that's going to be transpiring all the way along. And probably so that I can choose whether or not I want to do it. But when you are a servant of the Lord, you take the orders one step at a time if that's the way the Lord gives them.

When Peter was on the housetop in prayer at the house of Simon the Tanner, and the Lord spoke to him and he said that there are men at the gate that have been sent for you. Now go with them asking no questions. The Lord didn't tell him what he was had in, you know, in store.

That's all the further you get at this point, Peter. And God leads us so often just one step at a time. But often I hesitate to take that first step.

And I just continue to say, oh Lord, now show me your will. Oh God, I want your will to be done in my life. Well, God doesn't give us step two until we've taken step one.

After you've taken step one, then God will give you step two. God said to Abraham, get out of the land of your fathers and journey to a land that I will show you. So by faith, Abraham left the land of his fathers, not knowing where he was going.

Now that's real faith. God just told me, get out. Where are you going? I don't know.

Well, why are you leaving? Because God told me to leave. But where are you going? I don't know. Man, that doesn't make sense.

Well, it does. If you're a servant of God and you're getting your orders from him, he'll give you a step two when you've taken step one. And so we must step out in faith.

If God has given us step one, then step out in faith, take that which you understand and know at this point. And when you get there, God will give you the next step. And he leads us step by step.

The will of God is usually a progressive revelation to each of our hearts. It is a continuing progressive revelation. Now, I would prefer that God didn't do it that way because I don't really enjoy walking by faith.

I trust much more in my intellect and understanding than I do faith. And so I would prefer that God would just lay the whole thing out in advance so I'd know each step and each turn that was going to come in the road. But God hasn't seen fit to lead me that way.

He just says, go to Damascus and then I'll show you there, you know, take step one, then you will receive step two. The progressive revelation of God's will to our lives because God wants us to walk by faith. For without faith, it is impossible to please God.

So arise, go to Damascus and there you'll get step two. It'll be told you what is appointed for you to do. So when I could not see for the glory of that light, this brilliant light blinded Paul for a period of time.

I was led by the hand of them that were with me and I came unto Damascus. And there was a man by the name of Ananias who was a devout man according to the law. He was just like you guys.

And he had a good report of all of the Jews which dwelt there. So Paul is building up Ananias now. He's not some renegade.

He's a man who was devout and a good reputation among the Jews there in Damascus. And he came to me and he stood and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive your sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him and he said, The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know his will and see that just or that righteous one.

Paul saw Jesus there on the road to Damascus. Paul, as he is giving the list of those who had seen the resurrected Christ, talks about his appearance to Mary, then to the disciples, then to over 500 people at one time. And then Paul said, And finally unto me as one born out of due season.

And when he is giving his proof for apostleships or for the right of being called an apostle, he said, Have I not seen the risen Lord? Ananias said, God has chosen you. When Paul is writing his letter to the Ephesians and he begins in chapter one after his opening greeting, he began saying, Thanks be unto God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ in heavenly places. The top of the list of Paul's thanksgiving list to God for the wonderful things that God had done for all of the spiritual blessings he had received, the very top of the list, Paul put, having been chosen in him before the foundations of the world.

That headed the list of Paul's thanksgiving and probably should be the head of all of our list if we really understand what it means to be chosen of God. Now here Ananias is declaring this to Paul. God chose you, Paul.

Jesus said to his disciples, you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. So Paul writing to the saints declares that we've been chosen in him before the foundations of the world. You see, if the Lord didn't choose me, then everything else would be totally wasted.

How grateful I am that God chose me. The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know his will and see that just one and should hear the voice of his mouth. So Paul there on the road, God chose him.

And Paul realized the grace of God in choosing him because when Paul was chosen, he was breathing out murders, threats against the church. He was highly incensed against Christianity, against Jesus Christ. And yet the Lord chose him that he should not only see Jesus, but that he should hear his voice.

And you shall be his witness unto all men of what you have seen. And heard. And now why do you tarry arise and be baptized and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord.

So Paul to these Jews is recounting to them his own personal experience of meeting the risen Christ. I know the way you're thinking. I understand your attitudes.

I was where you are. I also persecuted the church, putting to death those that walked in this way. And I was on my way to Damascus to imprison those who called upon the name of the Lord when the Lord apprehended me.

So it came to pass that when I came again to Jerusalem, now it sounded like from the text here that Paul returned immediately to Jerusalem from Damascus, but that was not so. He stayed in Damascus for a period of time, short period of time, but then he went out into the desert. He went out to Arabia and there he spent close to three years as God revealed to Paul during that period, God's will for Paul's life.

As God corrected his whole understanding of the old Testament scriptures. Paul returned from Arabia to Damascus, began to preach Christ boldly in the synagogues, got the Jews all upset who decided to kill him. So his friends let him down over the wall in a basket so he could escape from Damascus because the Jews were waiting at the gate of the city to ambush him when he went to leave.

And so he came down to Jerusalem, but that was some three years later, but Luke passes it all over, leaves a lot of the history absent. And perhaps Paul did in his witness here. And it came to pass that when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance.

Now there are other places where a trance like state is mentioned by those in prayer. And it was in this state that they received visions and that they received really the voice of the Lord speaking to their hearts. I understand what a trance is by definition.

To my knowledge, I have never been in a trance. That's not to say that I am opposed to being in a trance. I'm open to anything God wants to do in any way God wants to speak to me.

And if God would want to put me in a trance and show me a vision or speak to me in a trance, I think that would be absolutely exciting. And the Lord knows I'm open to that if that's what He wants. However, the Lord does speak to me quite often.

He speaks to me through His Word. And I get just blessed beyond measure as God speaks to me right out of His Word. Now, again, I'm not opposed to visions, dreams, or trances.

I am really open to them. And I would frankly admit that I would enjoy such an experience. I would find it quite exciting indeed.

Lord, you heard that now. But as yet, I have not experienced it. But that's not to say that a person can't experience it or any experience would be invalid.

I do not believe that. However, however, any experience that I have must be subservient to the Word of God. Paul said, if I or an angel from heaven preach unto you any other gospel than that which you have already received, let him be anathema, let him be accursed.

You know, I mentioned a while back about some guy that used to send out these things on visions where he has this packet of all of these amazing visions and revelations that God has given him. This guy has

these for sale, \$5.95 special or a \$9.95 pack or \$14.95 for the whole caboodle. He built a million-dollar church in Phoenix off of the gullible people who sent in for these little vision packets.

But would you believe this last week I got a card from the guy and he's still in business? I haven't heard from him for 14 years. But Neil Frisbee is still getting visions of very interesting and exciting things and they're still packed in \$5.95, \$9.95 and \$14.95 packages. Learn what God, you know, it's better than the Kiplinger letter.

Cheaper. Years ago when I was getting almost on a weekly basis these little advertising flyers of the man's visions, I would look at them and then throw them away. But one day as I was on my way to a luncheon appointment running a little late, I stopped by the church and that was the first little church over on Church Street in Costa Mesa where we had a box out there.

And I stopped by and pulled the mail out of the box and started off and here was one of these Neil Frisbee flyers. And so I wadded the thing up and tossed it aside and then I stopped and I said, Lord, now I want to be open to you. You know, I don't want to have a closed mind to everything.

I hate being a cynic, though I have to admit that I am cynical about anybody who packages visions and sells them. But Lord, if this man has something to say that I should know or hear, hey, I'll venture for the \$5.95 pack. I mean, that's not too much.

I can spring for that. And the Lord spoke to my heart, not in a trance, just straight. I haven't had a trance yet.

He spoke to my heart, his word, Jeremiah. If a prophet hath a dream, let him tell his dream. But he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.

For what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord? You know, I got so excited when the Lord spoke to me that scripture, I pulled off the road because it was dangerous to drive in that condition. And it was just a time of just rejoicing in the fact that God has given me his word and all that we need for life and for godliness is right here, according to Peter. So any vision or dream or trance experience that I may have, and if I should come to you next Sunday night and say, folks, let me tell you, it happened this last week.

It happened. Went home Sunday night, and as I lay down, I went into a trance and oh, all these colors begin to emerge. And then I began to see and I began to reveal to you some dream or trance or vision that I had.

If it was not in complete keeping with the word of God, then I should be accursed. Secondly, if you would get more excited about that, then you do the word of God, then there's something wrong with your experience. Because I'm giving you chaff.

This is the wheat. Did you get that? If a prophet dreams a dream, let him tell his dream. But he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.

What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord? Don't set aside the wheat for chaff. What can you say about chaff? Well, have you ever tried to swallow it? I'm a fresh wheat fan. When I was a little kid, we had chickens.

And I'd go out to the chicken feed and I'd pick out the wheat because I found that we could chew the wheat for a while and it turned into a gum. And so I was always chewing wheat gum when I was a kid. And sometimes as I was pulling out the wheat to chew it into a gum, you get some chaff with it, some of that little hull.

But if you try to swallow that little hull, it always sticks someplace in your throat and you almost gag trying to get it back up. It's just hard to swallow. So what is the chaff to the wheat? Well, the chaff is hard to swallow.

So I saw him saying unto me, now he's in the trance, he's gone back and he's in the temple and he's gone into this trance and the Lord appeared to Paul again. And he said, make haste and get quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive your testimony concerning me. Now, Paul had gone down to really lay the witness on these guys because, you know, it was three years ago that he left to imprison all the Christians and now he's back.

And man, he's really souped up to really, you know, fully charged to lay the witness of Christ on them. And the Lord saying, hey, get out of here. They're not going to listen to your testimony concerning me.

And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on you. Lord, you're mistaken. These guys know how zealous I was against you.

And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by and consenting unto his death. In other words, I voted for his death, which shows that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, that council of religious leaders. I was consenting.

I was voting to for his death. And I kept the raiment of those that were killing him. God, they know me.

They know how I persecuted the church. Surely, Lord, they will believe me. And so here is Paul arguing with the Lord.

Always a mistake, because as I said this morning, any time you find yourself arguing with the Lord, just know you are wrong. The Lord's always right. And yet there are times I find myself arguing with the Lord.

I'm trying to persuade the Lord to see it my way. Lord, can't you see, you know, this is a natural law. But whenever you argue with the Lord, you're wrong.

So Paul found himself in that totally inconsistent position of arguing with the Lord, because if he's the Lord, really, there's no argument. You just do what he says. If he is truly the Lord.

And he said unto me, depart. He didn't argue with Paul, he just said, get out. For I will send you far hence unto the Gentiles.

And that word was like waving a red flag before a bull. As far as the Jews were concerned, when that word Gentiles was mentioned, it was lighting the match to the gasoline. The immediate explosion.

And they gave Paul audience up unto this word. And the moment he said Gentiles, they began to scream. Away with such a fellow from the earth.

It isn't fit that he should live. And they took off their clothes and began to wave them in the air and throwing dirt into the air. I mean, just really kicking up dirt, waving their clothes and this big commotion.

And the chief captain commanded Paul to be brought into the castle. And he ordered that he should be examined by scourging. That they might understand why the people got so excited.

What did he say? He was talking in Hebrew. The captain didn't understand Hebrew. All he saw is Paul's talking away.

Everybody's listening intently until all of a sudden, everybody starts to scream. They start taking off their clothes and waving them and throwing dirt in the air and trying to surge towards Paul to get him. And so he takes him in.

He says, scourge him, find out what he said. Scourging was a method of inquisition. It was what used to be called the third degree.

Now the prisoner has so many rights that if the officer doesn't say, please, the judge will let him off. But in those days, the Roman government would scourge a prisoner, which was a method of eliciting by torture the confessions from a prisoner. Most generally, they would tie his hands with thongs, the leather thongs, and then they would tie him to this post.

They called it the whipping post, where his back was in a bent over position, totally exposed. They would then take a whip called the cat of nine tails that had these leather straps with the little bits of broken glass and lead embedded in it that were designed to rip the flesh off of the body when the whip was laid down hard upon the body. Now they would tie the position, the prisoner in this position exposed back and then the fellow would begin to lay the lashes on and standing there would be a scribe, a court reporter, who would then record every confession of the prisoner.

And after each stripe, the prisoner would then cry out a confession. They would write it down. Then they lay another stripe on and he'd cry out something else that he had done.

And as long as the prisoner cooperated and would cry out his confessions, they'd lay it on a little easier until they had elicited from him a full confession to everything. And then they would just sort of lay it across his back until he had received 39 stripes. Quite often the prisoners died in this Inquisition.

It was very painful and it did cause a tremendous loss of blood. Now if a prisoner would refuse to confess to a crime, then the executioner would lay the stripe on heavier and heavier and heavier until he would be forced in agony to cry out his crimes. A real torturous device of the Roman government by which prisoners were interrogated and Rome was able to solve a lot of crimes.

In thinking of Jesus, Pilate ordered that he be scourged. Isaiah said, but as a lamb before her shears is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He had nothing to confess.

And so as they laid those 39 stripes on Jesus, each one was heavier and heavier until his body was broken, broken open. Bones weren't broken by this process, but the body was broken open. The back was like hamburger meat, ripped to shreds by this beating.

He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed. Paul was, they ordered that they scourge Paul.

However, as they bound him with these thongs, that was in preparation to scourge him. Paul said to the centurion that was standing by, is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and not condemned?

A Roman citizen could not be scourged unless he had first been a judge condemned by the court, guilty by the court, and then before the crucifixion they would usually scourge him to solve a lot of the unsolved crimes. And when the centurion heard that, he told the chief captain, he said, you better be careful what you do for this man is a Roman citizen.

And the chief captain came and he said to him, tell me, are you a Roman citizen? And Paul said, yes. The chief captain answered and he said, with a great sum of money obtained I this freedom. Paul said, I was born free.

Then immediately they departed from him, those which were going to examine him. And the chief captain was also afraid after he knew that Paul was a Roman because he had bound him, which was contrary to the Roman law, to bind a Roman citizen until formal charges had been made. And so on the morrow, because he would have known the certainty of the accusations of the Jews, he loosed Paul from his bonds and he commanded the chief priest and all of their council to appear.

And he brought Paul down and set him before him. And so Paul earnestly beholding the council said, men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. Paul was indeed a remarkable man.

As Paul is writing to the Philippian church and sharing with them the natural advantages that he had before he accepted Jesus Christ, as far as having a righteous standing before God by works. He said those things which were gain to me talking about the fact that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee. And he said, and concerning the keeping of the law, I was blameless, quite a remarkable man to be able to say, I have had always a good conscience before God up until this point.

Now I can't make that kind of a statement. Paul was really some kind of a fellow to be able to state. And I don't know how many of you could make that kind of a statement.

I've always had a good conscience before God up until this point, up until this day, the high priest didn't believe him. And Ananias commanded those that were standing by him to hit him in the mouth. And Paul said unto him, God will smite you, you whited or whitewashed wall.

Jesus made reference to the Pharisees as whitewashed sepulchers. Now the Jews were very careful about touching a dead body or anything that had touched a dead body. For according to the Jewish law to touch a dead body or anything that had touched a dead body would make you unclean.

And you would not be able to go into the temple to worship God until you had gone through a ceremonial cleansing. And this ceremonial cleansing had to be done in running water. Our last trip over to Israel, we had gone down into the spring of Gihon and the people were looking down the bottom of the shaft at the spring of Gihon there in the Kidron Valley.

And as we were there and talking about the spring and the cave that went from the spring of Gihon over to the pool of Siloam, some 1700 feet cut by the King Hezekiah and all, there was this young Jewish fellow with his black robes and black hat and curls and all who came into the spring. He was wanting to bathe in order to make himself ceremonially clean so he could go and pray at the Western Wall. And he got very impatient with us and our group taking so long looking at the spring so he started disrobing and so he could get into the water and you got to dip in running water in order that it might make you clean.

We got the message and got out of there as he was getting into the water. But it's just one of those things to become clean so you can worship in the temple you've got to go through this ceremony of washing in running water. So they didn't want to touch a dead body or anything that was touching a dead body or near a dead body and therefore when they would put up the tombstones they would always paint them with whitewash so that people would be very they would see them and be careful not to touch them so they would whitewash them so people wouldn't touch them accidentally.

And so Paul said you're just a whitewashed wall you know you've got you know you're unclean you've got death and all I mean pretty he lost his cool really and just didn't really turn the other cheek but just said God will smite you you whitewashed wall. Paul was upset because you're sitting here to judge me concerning the law and yet you have commanded me to be smitten contrary to the law. It was unlawful to just hit the prisoner during interrogations.

So Paul was upset here a guy is supposed to be a judge of the law and he's violating the law himself and it just snapped him Paul and so he flared and called him the whitewashed wall. Interestingly enough in two years God did smite Annas this whitewashed wall. He was assassinated within two years of this time and they that stood by said they were probably shocked they said you revilest thou the high priest.

Now this perhaps is an indication that Paul did have eye trouble because Paul said I did not know brothers that he was the high priest for it is written thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. There are other indications that Paul did have eye problems. This is thought by many to have been his thorn in the flesh.

The minister of Satan buffeting him. He writing his Galatian letters said you had such love for me some of you would have if possible given me your own eyes and it could be a very direct reference to severe eye problems. So according to some of the early stories Paul was a short bony little Jew with constant running eyes from these eye problems squinting with a very large angular nose.

I don't care what he looks like. I love the guy. Oh what a mind.

Isaac Watts was just a short little fellow less than five feet tall and yet probably one of the greatest minds of England. He was always sickly. Isaac Watts just a short sickly little fellow and that is why he wrote were I so tall to reach the pole or span the ocean with my hand.

I must be measured by my soul for the mind is the standard of a man. See he didn't have much of a physical prowess but oh what a mental prowess this man had. Paul the apostle not much to look at physically but spiritually he was beautiful.

And so he's probably saying I didn't know that was a high priest. Sorry about that fellow because the Bible says I'm not supposed to revile the ruler. Sorry about that.

Now when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other were Pharisees he cried out in the council men and brethren I am a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee and of the hope of the resurrection of the dead. I am called in question today. Now when he had said this there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the multitude was divided for the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection neither angels nor spirits but the Pharisees confess both.

And so there arose a great cry in the scribes that were of the Pharisees part arose and they strove saying we find no evil in this man if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him let's not fight against God. And when

there arose a great dissension the chief captain fearing lest they would have torn Paul to pieces commanded the soldiers to go down and to take him by force from among them to bring him under the castle. So again Paul's endeavor to bear witness ends in riot.

His lifelong dream and ambition to preach the gospel to the Jews he felt he could be successful. He was an absolute total miserable failure. Both endeavors ended in riots.

Now there are some who perceive this as a very clever move on Paul's part to bring a division among these accusers. They look at it as a clever scheme by Paul to pit the Sadducees against the Pharisees so while they're all fighting you know he can slip out under the table and get out and leave the whole room you know going at each other. That's possibly so.

I personally don't believe it. I believe that Paul was intending to preach the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the Pharisees. And so he brings up the fact I'm a Pharisee again seeking to identify.

And it's because I believe in the resurrection that I've been brought here. And I believe that he wanted to go on and preach to those Pharisees the truth of the resurrection through Jesus Christ. But before he had that chance the whole thing exploded and he had to be taken by force from among them before they tore him to pieces.

Paul must have been extremely discouraged brought back to the Antonio fortress placed back into protective custody of the Roman government as night began to fall. Paul must have been extremely discouraged sitting there not knowing what the future held only aware of his failure to fulfill his lifelong dream to bring salvation to his brothers according to the flesh. Paul had such an intense love for the Jews that he said in his Roman epistles that he could wish himself accursed from God for his brethren's sake according to the flesh.

He testified of his great love for them. He had had a yearning to preach to them. It finally the opportunity came perhaps forced by Paul but nonetheless that was his big moment and it ended in disaster.

Here you're confident that you're able to do something. You're so sure if I just got a chance. Oh man I just haven't had the chance to say if I just had a chance just give me the chance.

You're a halfback and you know that you could run through that line and outrun the backfield and you could score. Oh let me have the ball just let me let me carry the ball you know. Every time you go back to the huddle you're telling the quarterback I want to carry it I want to carry it give me a chance give me a chance.

So he finally calls the play your number you get your chance. The quarterback receives the ball from center hands off to you you start through the line and one of the big tackles grabs you strips the ball you fumble and the other team recovers and the coach pulls you out you're sitting on the bench. My big moment I blew it discouraged dejected Paul sat there and in that time of dejection and discouragement the Lord came and stood by him.

How beautiful how beautiful and the Lord said be of good cheer Paul. The word in Greek has been translated in another place be of good courage. Jesus said this on many occasions and it might be a little interesting study for you to go back and and see the various places where Jesus said be of good cheer be of good courage when the disciples were in the ship trying to go across the other side and Jesus came walking on the water and they were frightened you know they thought they were seeing ghosts he said be

of good courage you guys are scared to death you know be of good courage it's I.

Paul be of good courage shows that he was discouraged he probably thought oh this is it this is the end I you know I'm no good I can't do anything for God I finally got my chance and I just oh why did I say Gentiles why did I blow my cool call the high priest a whitewashed wall oh what's wrong with me if I had not said Gentiles if I just done this if I just said that oh how easy it is to sink in the quagmire of the why's and the ifs of life as we go back and try to change what is but all it can do is take us deeper into that slough of despair and Paul was sinking and so the Lord came and stood by him be of good cheer Paul be of good courage for as you have testified of me in Jerusalem all right Paul you've done it you've had your chance and you testified of me in Jerusalem now the Lord

isn't making light of it the Lord is acknowledging it the Lord's not condemning Paul the Lord doesn't join Paul in his why's and ifs he doesn't say Paul why did you lose your cool man well how could you have been so stupid as to mention Gentiles you know their attitude towards Gentiles he didn't come in condemning Paul he came in commending him which is so true of Jesus how is it that we always seem to picture Jesus as condemning us probably because of all the preachers we've heard in the past I know that that's true in my own case man I've been condemned by so many preachers during my whole lifetime I mean the finger was always pointing at me I'm guilty you know and so I in my mind just associated that with Jesus and I figured Jesus was constantly condemning me for good reason but one

day I read there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus and I read where Jesus said I did not come to condemn the world but that the world through me might be saved and he that believeth is not condemned and then I read Paul's question who is he that condemneth and I read his answer not Jesus for he died yea rather is risen again and is even at the right hand of the father making intercession for me he's not my condemner he's my intercessor and my whole life changed my relationship with Jesus changed completely when I found out that he was there to lift me up instead of to push me down he was there to draw me in instead of push me out he was there to lift me up I know how thankful I am for Jesus and he stood by Paul and he said be of good courage Paul for as you

have testified of me in Jerusalem and he acknowledged all you have testified of me here you've given them the testimony so must you also bear witness of me in Rome Rome Lord did you say Rome all right because when Paul began this whole journey back in Ephesus taking off first for Macedonia and then to Greece to collect the offerings from the churches that he might bring them to the poor saints in Jerusalem as he was leaving Ephesus he said I'm going to head off this way because he said I want to get to Jerusalem before the feast of the Passover and he said and I must also see Rome and he was expressing there a deep desire in his heart oh I want to see Rome Paul was always challenged by the centers of the world by the population centers and by the cultural centers oh if I can only bear

witness of Jesus in Rome and Jesus says be of good cheer Paul you've testified of me here in Jerusalem now you've got to bear witness of me in Rome Rome oh the new courage the new hope the new faith the new calling back on the road the new zeal the new drive ready to go again it's always comforting when the Lord sets out a destination for us because we know that nothing can deter us until we reach that destination there were a lot of things that come in Paul's path before he gets to Rome as we'll find out this next week one of them in the next verse and when it was day there were certain of the Jews that banded together and bound themselves under a curse and what they do is say may God curse us if we don't accomplish this task so they bind themselves with this curse God curse us if we

don't do it and so they bound themselves under the curse saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul so they really were out to get him and there were more than 40 which entered into this conspiracy and they came to the chief priests and the elders who evidently weren't that honorable of people and they said we have bound ourselves under a great curse that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul now we want you with the council to signify to the chief captain that he bring Paul down to you tomorrow as though you would inquire something more perfectly concerning him and we before he ever gets here we'll pounce on him and we're ready to kill him now Paul's sister's son and this is the only mention of any relatives of Paul in the scriptures but his nephew

his sister's son heard of this plot to ambush him and so he entered into the castle and told Paul now remember the Lord said to Paul you must bear witness of me in Rome because the Lord said that you can be sure Paul's going to bear witness in Rome the word of the Lord has to come to pass the Lord speaks with that advantage of foreknowledge or what they call precognition today so that when the Lord said you must bear witness of me in Rome Paul will surely get to Rome now here's an obstacle no little obstacle 40 guys taking this curse upon themselves if they you know not going to eat or drink till they kill him now God works his supernatural ways often in the natural and I was talking with a pastor this week who'd come in to just sit down and share some time together in the word and

exploring some of the things of God and I said to him it's very important that we as Christians learn to discover how that the supernatural works in natural ways you see the danger many times is not to recognize the work of God because it seems so natural but in reality it is God's work therefore it is supernatural but sometimes people are so spiritually dull that they don't recognize the supernatural and lest there is some kind of spectacular phenomenon but a person who is keenly attuned to spiritual things will learn to see God and recognize the hand of God in very natural circumstances and we must not look for God only in some kind of spectacular phenomena but begin to look for him in the very natural things for God works his supernatural works in very natural ways and so it seems

quite natural that this little boy listening to these men talk and they're talking about my uncle Paul you know and so he listens to their plot well I see the supernatural in that God has to protect Paul from the plot so he plants this little kid in and who knows what the little kid was doing when suddenly he got the idea to run over and play with his little friend and when he got over to his little friend's house his dad was in there with a bunch of guys and here they were plotting talking about it well we'll get him you know we don't eat or anything and and how you know by what method God got the little kid where he heard it I don't know but it was supernatural and yet it seems so natural so he came and he warned Paul and so Paul called one of the centurions and he said take this little

boy to the captain for he has some things to tell him so he took him brought him to the chief captain and he said Paul the prisoner called me into him the centurion brought him in he said Paul called me and he asked me to bring this little boy to you who has something to say into you so the chief captain took him by the hand and he went aside privately with him and he said what is it that you need to tell me and he said the jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the council because they are going to pretend that they want to inquire somewhat of him more perfectly but don't yield to their request for they're lying in wait about 40 men which have bound themselves with an oath that they're not going to eat or drink until they've killed him and and so now they're going to

be coming real quick for a promise from you to bring him down so the chief captain then let the young man depart and he charged him he said don't tell anybody that you have showed me these things so he called

to him two centurions and he said make ready 200 soldiers to go to caesarea and 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen at the third hour of the night and provide them with animals that they met may set paul on them and bring him safe unto felix the governor and he wrote a letter after this manner claudius lysias unto the most excellent governor felix i send greetings this man was taken of the jews and would have been killed by them and i came with an army and rescued him having understood that he was a roman and when i would have known the cause why they were accusing him i brought him forth

into their council and i perceived that all they were doing is accusing him of questions about their law but have laid no charges against him that are worthy of death or imprisonment and when it was told me how that the jews were ready to ambush the man i sent him straightway to thee and i gave commandment to his accusers also to say before you what they have against him farewell and then the soldiers as it was commanded them took paul and brought him by night to antipatris now from jerusalem to caesarea is a journey of about 60 miles of which some 40 miles are through mountain country where the jews lived and would have been easy to ambush paul from antipatris that is at the foot of the jerusalem mountains and from there to caesarea is just flat land and uh be difficult to ambush someone

in that area so paul the lord says you got to go to rome and he starts off in a royal way with an escort of 470 soldiers 70 cavalry men cavalry men and there are 200 spearmen and 200 foot soldiers infantry troops that are accompanying paul out of rome the 40 miles to antipatris where the foot soldiers and the spearmen leave and the cavalry men take paul on then from antipatris to caesarea that he might be tried before felix now this fellow felix before whom paul was to be tried was at one time a slave he had a brother paulus palace p-a-l-l-u-s and palace was one of nero's favorite persons and so his brother palace interceded with nero and nero freed felix from his slavery through the continued intercession of his brother palace nero made him the only slave to become a governor in the

roman empire up till that point he was the first slave who became a governor however he was a very crude person he was corrupt and tacitus the historian said he governed like a slave felix had three wives in quick succession we do not know the name of his first wife the second was the granddaughter to cleopatra and anthony whom he divorced and married finally drusilla who was the daughter of ered agrippa the first at this time felix had been reigning as governor over the province for five years very corrupt reign he was to reign for two more years before being deposed and banished by the roman government because of his corruption so this is the man before whom paul must appear now to make his next defense so when they came to caesarea they delivered the letter to the governor and they

presented paul also before him and when the governor had read the letter he asked what province paul was from and he answered cilia and he said i will hear thee when your accusers are also calm and he commanded him to be kept in herod's judgment hall here to build a palace in caesarea so paul's stay wasn't too bad there in caesarea it's a beautiful mediterranean port he was there in herod's palace the judgment hall that was made by herod there so herod made a fabulous city the ruins of of herod's period in caesarea are awesome the hippodrome the the stadium and and those ruins that date back to herod's time are absolutely awesome there in caesarea so paul is now a prisoner in herod's palace in caesarea to await uh this crew who come down next week in our lesson and make their accusation

having hired this sharp attorney who is a silver-tongued orator so next week let's see if we can finish the book of acts so that's your assignment and we'll see how far we can go i believe that we're on the verge of seeing another great marvelous move of god i really feel that god is desiring to do more even more than we've already seen and what we've already seen is just so phenomenal i can't handle it but i i really feel

that god wants to do even more for us and and i want to be open to god that's my desire i really don't have any ambition for greatness or power or notoriety i just want to do what god wants done and uh i really feel that god is wanting to do more and i want to be open to whatever god might want to do and uh so i would just encourage you fellas come on out let's just

pray let's make ourselves available to god to just see what god might want to do maybe he's satisfied with what he has done i don't think so but maybe but that's all right too well let's give him a chance anyhow i always like to just make myself available to god here i am lord want to do anything i'm available it's an exciting life that life of availability to god because you never know what god's going to call upon you to do at a given time my wife and i were going home from church thursday night we got down here to baker and adams and uh actually what happened is a police car passed us uh as we were going home and and we were right at the freeway and this police car came screaming by over the lights and the whole siren and the whole thing and we saw him make a quick u and park there on

baker so we knew that we were going to come up on whatever was there and there was a car parked there in the intersection and there was a guy lying there on the pavement and my wife says honey go go see if you can do anything you go see if he's all right you know he's just lying there a lot of people that run up and gather on he said go go see if you can do something honey so i started to park and she said oh god help that poor guy i've never seen such a quick answer to prayer before i got there the guy was standing up and limping off you know so real power through prayer but you never know what god might have in store so availability to him god bless you may he give you a good week and may he use your life and may each of our hearts be open to the spirit that god might work in us his

supernatural works in supernatural or natural ways whatever way he sees fit but that god will just use my life and work through my life his work this way

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