



## *ACTS - Living in the Promises of Jesus*

### Acts 23

### Lesson 19

Paul again found himself imprisoned as a result of conflict with the religious leaders over God's desire to save the Gentiles and his belief in the resurrection. He also found himself in the presence of the Lord. The *Lord stood by him* and spoke to him. May we find the words of the Lord, spoken to us, equally encouraging as we face the tribulations of our lives.

#### **OBSERVATION: Read Acts 23**

1. Read through this week's verses using both your Observation Worksheet (the last page of this homework) and another Bible translation or paraphrase. After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they are about?
2. Key words help us to better understand the verses. We have listed below key words. Mark each one in a distinctive way (either with a symbol, highlighting, or some form of boxing, circling, or underlining). Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text. Remember to mark any personal pronouns that refer to *God, Jesus, Paul*, and those who opposed Paul.  
Key Words: *God, Jesus, Paul*, any words that refer to those who were opposing Paul (i.e. *council, Pharisees, Sadducees, high priest*)
3. The contrasting word *but* was used seven times in Acts 23. Mark each time the word is used. Choose one of those times and record what is being contrasted.
4. The term of conclusion, *therefore*, was used in verse 15. Mark the word. Record the conclusion and what it was based upon.

5. Scan your markings related to Paul's accusers. What are some things you discovered about them?

### THE SANHEDRIN DIVIDED: Read Acts 23:1-10

1. The events of Acts 23 began with the last verse of chapter 22. According to Acts 22:30, the commander brought Paul before the *chief priests and their council*. Why did he do this? Verse 30
2. What were the first words Paul spoke as he stood before this religious council of his accusers?
  - a. Paul was not sinless. How can a sinful man *live in all good conscience before God*?
    - 1.) Record the words of Hebrews 13:18.
      - a.) How can a *desire to live honorably* lead to having a *good conscience before God*?
      - b.) What is necessary in order to have a *good conscience before God*?
3. When Paul was persecuting the church, we know that he was actually *very wrong*, but what did he think he was doing at the time? (see Acts 22:3,4)
  - a. When Jesus revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus, as soon as Paul realized who Jesus really was, what was his immediate response? (Acts 22:10)
  - b. What was the result for Paul personally, as he obeyed the voice of Jesus, going on to Damascus, and being ministered to by God's servant Ananias? (Acts 22:16)
    - 1.) When you truly recognized Jesus for the first time and called upon His name, seeking to turn your life over to Him, what did He do for you, just as He did for Paul? 1 Corinthians 6:11
    - 2.) What does Hebrews 10:22 say about this, especially in relation to our *conscience*?

4. Acts 23:2-4 describes a volatile interaction between Paul and the high priest. What happened?
  - a. Look back at the original accusations against Paul by the Jews in Acts 21:28. What did the Jews throughout Jerusalem (including this council) think about Paul?
    - 1.) Considering this, why might Anaias have been so angered at Paul's remark?
5. In Acts 23:5, Paul quoted Exodus 22:28. What does it say?
  - a. How does this commandment apply to us today?
6. According to Acts 23:6, what did Paul *perceive*?
  - a. What was the theological difference between Pharisee and Sadducees? verse 8
    - 1.) Which sect was right? Why?
  - b. In what circumstances would it not be wise to pit people against one another?
7. Using Acts 23:9,10 describe the intensity of their response?

### **THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST PAUL: Read Acts 23:11-22**

1. In response to the *great dissension, the commander...commanded the soldiers to bring Paul into the barracks*. What encouraging words did Paul hear from the Lord *the following night*?
  - a. The phrase *be of good cheer* is more literally translated, *be of good courage*. Define the word *courage*.
2. The Lord *stood by* Paul, giving him a promise specific to his circumstances. What is the promise of Psalm 46:1?
  - a. How have you discovered this to be a promise for you?

3. Acts 23:12-15 describes a *conspiracy* formed against Paul. Describe this *conspiracy* by answering the following questions:
  - a. What was the *oath* that was made?
  - b. How many were involved in the *conspiracy*?
  - c. Reading between the lines in verses 14,15, what apparently were the feelings of the religious leaders about this *conspiracy*?
    - 1.) Sadly, it is all too easy to fall prey, failing to stop others from doing wrong, when we think we might benefit from it. What is the lesson for us here?
  - d. What emotion provoked the religious leaders to seek Jesus' death? Mark 15:10
    - 1.) What are some synonyms for the word *envy*?
    - 2.) Write the warning of Proverbs 14:30 in your own words.
  - e. What were the details of their plan?
4. What did *Paul's sister's son* do when he *heard of their ambush*?
  - a. When is it right to play the role of informant in correcting a wrong?
  - b. What did Paul do when he heard of the *conspiracy* against him?
  - c. Look again at Jesus' words in verse 11. What assurance did Paul have that this ambush would not be successful?
    - 1.) In spite of the Lord's promise to Paul, Paul did not ignore the threat on his life. What can we learn from this?
5. Using Acts 23:17-22, describe what happened next.

## PAUL SENT TO FELIX: Acts 23:23-35

1. *More than 40 Jews were lying in wait for Paul.* How many men did the commander tell the two centurions to prepare to accompany Paul to Caesarea?
2. To whom was the commander sending Paul?
3. Read the letter that the commander sent to Felix. What information about Paul did Claudius Lysias tell Felix?
  - a. What did Claudius Lysias *command Paul's accusers* to do? verse 30
  - b. What wisdom do you detect as you consider this commander's actions and letter?
4. The soldiers delivered both Paul and the letter to Felix. Where did he *command Paul to be kept*? verse 35
  - a. Record the prophesy of Agabus in Acts 21:11.
    - 1.) We see the fulfillment of this prophesy in Acts 23. As far as we know, this trip to Jerusalem that was so important to Paul resulted in uproar, rather than conversions. Put yourself in Paul's sandals and consider what he might have been thinking. How do you handle things when they don't turn out as you expected?
    - 2.) Paul's chains were literal. However, there are many times we might feel *chained*, or limited, or confined. What are some ways a person can be *chained* in this life?
      - a.) What are some examples of responses that would be pleasing to the Lord?

## REVIEW: Read Acts 23

1. Summarize the highlights that stood out to you as you studied:
  - a. THE SANHEDRIN DIVIDED
  - b. THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST PAUL
  - c. PAUL SENT TO FELIX
2. Paul considered his audience when he spoke to the Pharisees and Sadducees. What can we learn from his example?
3. How have you been challenged to watch for ways you can make a difference in potentially volatile situations?
4. Paul had been warned that chains awaited him in Jerusalem. Jesus has warned us that we will have tribulations. In what ways can we be more like Paul in handling the difficult times of this life?
5. What do you consider to be an important lesson to be gleaned from this homework?

*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.  
In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."  
- John 16:33*

## Observation Worksheet

### Acts 23:1-35

Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." <sup>2</sup> And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. <sup>3</sup> Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" <sup>4</sup> And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" <sup>5</sup> Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.' " <sup>6</sup> But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" <sup>7</sup> And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. <sup>8</sup> For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection--and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. <sup>9</sup> Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." <sup>10</sup> Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks. <sup>11</sup> But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." <sup>12</sup> And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. <sup>13</sup> Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. <sup>14</sup> They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. <sup>15</sup> Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near." <sup>16</sup> So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. <sup>17</sup> Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him." <sup>18</sup> So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you." <sup>19</sup> Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?" <sup>20</sup> And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. <sup>21</sup> But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you." <sup>22</sup> So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded him, "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me." <sup>23</sup> And he called for two centurions,

saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; <sup>24</sup> and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor." <sup>25</sup> He wrote a letter in the following manner: <sup>26</sup> Claudius Lysias, To the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings. <sup>27</sup> This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. <sup>28</sup> And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. <sup>29</sup> I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains. <sup>30</sup> And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him. Farewell. <sup>31</sup> Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. <sup>32</sup> The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks. <sup>33</sup> When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. <sup>34</sup> And when the governor had read it, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that he was from Cilicia, <sup>35</sup> he said, "I will hear you when your accusers also have come." And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.