



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

LESSON 17 - STUDY QUESTIONS ACTS 22:1–23:35

DAY ONE

1. What idea from the Commentary, Spiritual Reflection, or your daily study Lesson 16 (Acts 20-21) was helpful or made you think?

Read Acts 22:1-11

2a. As last week's lesson closed, Paul had been arrested in the Temple and was about to be brought into the barracks. He had motioned for the angry crowd to quiet. Neither the Jewish mob nor the Roman soldiers knew what to expect. What was Paul's opening sentence?

b. What was the crowd's reaction to Paul's words (verse 2)?

3a. In verse 3, Paul states that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. Summarize what we learned about this man in Acts 5:34.

b. What other things does Paul tell about himself in verse 3?

4. Describe in your own words why the Jewish crowd was angry at Paul (refer to Acts 21:21) and how in his speech he tried to appeal to them.

5. In verses 4-11, Paul retold the story of his conversion on the road to Damascus. For what reason(s) do you think he shared his conversion with the angry crowd?

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6. CONNECTION: This is the second "telling" of Paul's conversion (the first occurred in Acts 9:1-19). This was a most significant moment for Paul, a moment for which he must have been both grateful and sorrowful. Like Paul, we too can consider that for which we are grateful and that for which we are sorry. This exercise is called the *Examen of Consciousness*. St. Ignatius of Loyola recommended that every day we reflect upon our "best" and "worst" moments, and in so doing, we can find God in the moments of our day. Here is a version of the five-step Daily Examen that St. Ignatius practiced.

1. Become aware of God's presence.
2. Review the day with gratitude.
3. Pay attention to your emotions.
4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.
5. Look toward tomorrow

With this Examen in mind, spend some time becoming aware of God's presence, then reflect in silence on your day, then pick a best

or worst feature of your day and how that moment made you feel. Hold this moment up in prayer and record how you feel about that moment after you pray. Share with your small group how this process may have changed your attitude or brought you closer to God

Read and record Psalm 139:1-2 and let this lead you into prayer.

DAY TWO

Read Acts 22:12-21

7a. In today's passage, Paul continued relating the story of his conversion. He told the people that Ananias, a devout and well-respected man, came to him in Damascus, and said "Brother Saul, regain your sight." What happened then, according to verse 13?

b. According to verse 14, what three things did Ananias tell Paul he had been chosen to do? For what reason was Paul chosen (verse 15)?

8. In verse 16, Ananias instructed Paul to get up and do three things without delay. List them.

9. In verses 17-18, we learn for the first time of an incident that happened after Paul's conversion. What happened to Paul when he returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple?

10. Summarize Paul's response to Jesus from verses 19-20.

11. Record Jesus' answer in verse 21:

12. CONNECTION: From Paul's conversion story, we can see that God chose an unlikely candidate to be his apostle to the Gentiles. That's nothing new for God. He chose Moses, an Egyptian prince, to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. He chose David, a shepherd boy, to be the king of all Israel. He chose Mary, a simple maiden, to be the Mother of His Son. He chose Peter, an uneducated fisherman, to be the leader of His church. Was there a task for which God chose you and for which you may have seemed an unlikely candidate? Record some details about this situation and how you were able to accomplish this work.

Read and record the last two sentences of the Lord's words to the prophet Samuel when he was looking for God's choice for the king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:7). Begin your prayer today knowing that you have what it takes to accomplish his work.

NOTE: "God has created me to do him some definite service; he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission - I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next ... I have a part in a great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons ..." - Cardinal John Henry Newman

DAY THREE

Read Acts 22:22-30

13. As today's lesson opens, Paul had just repeated God's words telling him to go to the Gentiles. According to verses 22-23, the crowd reacted violently. What did they shout and what actions accompanied their words?

14a. The tribune directed the soldiers to bring Paul into the barracks and to examine him. How was Paul to be examined and for what purpose (verse 24)?

b. As they tied him up and prepared to flog him, what did Paul ask the centurion (verse 25)?

15. What did the centurion ask the tribune and why (verse 26)?

16a. The tribune came to speak with Paul. According to verse 28, what interesting fact does the tribune give about his own citizenship?

b. What does Paul say in reply to the tribune's admission (end of verse 28)?

17a. Describe the effect of Paul's words on the tribune and on those around him (verse 29).

b. Because the tribune still wanted to know why Paul was being accused by the Jews, what actions did he take (verse 30)?

18. CONNECTION. At this point in his life, Paul did not hesitate to invoke the rights of his Roman citizenship to protect himself. As citizens of this country, we too have many rights. We are blessed to have, among others, the right to due process of law, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion. Without getting into politics, prayerfully consider and share your thoughts on what these rights mean to you.

Our Declaration of Independence states, "We hold these truths to be self evident, that we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, including the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Our rights were given by our Creator. Write a prayer thanking God for these blessings.

DAY FOUR

Read Acts 23:1-11

19a. From yesterday's lesson, we recall that Paul was brought before the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jews. As this passage opens,

he was standing before them, looking at them intently. What did he say to them?

b. When the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near him to strike him on the mouth, Paul responded with strong words. Summarize what he said, according to verse 3.

20. When those standing nearby asked Paul how he dared to say such a thing to God's high priest, he took back his words. Record Paul's apology (verse 5).

21. In verse 6, we learn that Paul noticed both Sadducees and Pharisees on the Council. From your reading of verses 7-9, briefly explain an important difference between these two Jewish sects, and how it caused these two groups to turn against each other.

22. The tribune was afraid that the Jews would tear Paul to pieces. What did the tribune order the soldiers to do with Paul for his own protection (verse 10)?

23. In verse 11, we learn that that night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Keep up your courage! For just as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also in Rome." How would going to Rome fulfill the plan of the Holy Spirit for Paul (see Acts 1:8)?

24. CONNECTION: The Lord stood by Paul and told him to keep up his courage because He wanted Paul "to bear witness also in Rome."

What a great mission was planned for Paul ... he was to witness to God in the world's greatest city. And what joy to know that the Lord stood by him. What peace Paul must have had, to hear that despite the apparent failure of his mission, he was fulfilling the Lord's plan. Do you sometimes feel that nothing is going right? Describe a time when you received a message from the Holy Spirit that revived your courage and set you back on track!

Keep up your courage and continue to bear witness. Read and record [Luke 1:45](#) and believe!

DAY FIVE

Read Acts 23:12-22

25. As yesterday's passage closed, the Lord told Paul to keep up his courage. According to verse 12, why was Paul going to need courage?

26. In your own words, briefly give the details of their plan as recorded in verses 13-15.

27. When Roman citizens were in custody, as Paul was at this time, they could be visited by their friends and family. Who came to Paul and why (verse 16)?

28. Paul called one of the centurions and asked him to take the young man to the tribune because he had something to report (verse 17). Briefly describe the meeting that took place between the tribune and the young man (verses 18-22).

29. CONNECTION: Isn't it touching to hear that it was Paul's sister's son who overheard the plot and warned Paul and the tribune of the danger? We do not hear much about Paul's family. Paul gave up his personal life to preach the gospel 24/7. But isn't it wonderful to think of his sister and her son caring for Paul? We do not always see eye to eye with family members on every question, but it is a blessing to have them. How have you been blessed by family members appearing out of nowhere to give you a hand in need?

Read and record [Galatians 6:2](#) and let these thoughts lead you into prayer.

DAY SIX

Read Acts 23:23-35

30. In yesterday's passage, Paul's nephew informed the tribune about a plot to kill Paul. The tribune dismissed the nephew, instructing him to tell no one. As today's passage opens, the story continues. What actions did the tribune take, according to verses 23-24?

NOTE: The seat of the Roman government in Judea was not Jerusalem but Caesarea.

31. The tribune, Claudius Lysias, sent Paul to Caesarea to see Felix, the Roman governor, with a letter explaining how the Jews attempted to kill Paul, a Roman citizen. The tribune had rescued Paul and brought him before the Sanhedrin, who accused him of breaking Jewish law (verses 27-28). Verses 29-30 continue to recount the story of the tribune saving Paul and sending him to Felix. For what reason do you think the tribune would save Paul and send him on to the Roman governor?

32a. How did the soldiers respond to Claudius' orders, according to verses 31-32?

b. When the horsemen got to Caesarea with Paul, what did they do (verse 33)?

THINK: The town of Caesarea was also the location where Jesus declared Peter as “the rock on which I will build my church” (Matthew 16:13). It lay near cascades in the Jordan River and near a gigantic wall of rock, a wall about 200 feet high and 500 feet long. Consider what an appropriate place this was for Jesus to declare Peter as the “rock!”

33. When Felix read the letter, he asked Paul to what province he belonged (verse 34). When he learned that Paul was from Cicilia, what did he say, and then what did he do (verse 35)?

34. CONNECTION: God must have a sense of humor, and we should as well. Just imagine 40 men swearing neither to eat nor drink until Paul was dead ... a very scary proposition! But God used the 40 enraged men to accomplish His will. In fact, God used the 40 men to have Paul brought to Caesarea under Roman protection, and, for now, out of harm's way. In our time, we also worry about ourselves and our loved ones. We may worry about danger from break-ins, fire, flood, or murderers; but the Lord always has a plan for us, and it is always better than any we could devise on our own. What unusual ways has God used to bring you out of danger, or to accomplish His will in your life?

Read and record Isaiah 55:8 and consider what this tells you about God's ways compared with our ways. Let those thoughts lead you into prayer.

After completing this lesson, read Chapters 22 and 23 (refer to pages 128-133 in the edition copyrighted in 1992 by Our Sunday Visitor or pages 161-169 in the edition reprinted in 2013 by Saint Benedict Press) in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* by Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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