



Power to Witness in Word and Deed —Part 2

The Book of Acts

Acts 23:12–35

Read Acts 23:12–35.

1. As you look at the following verses, record the pressure Paul has been under for the past few days.
 - 21:27
 - 21:28–29
 - 21:30
 - 21:31
 - 21:33
 - 22:22–23
 - 23:9–10
2. Following the fierce debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees, forty men form a conspiracy to kill Paul (vv. 12–13). Why do you think these men seek to take matters into their own hands? (Consider what happened the previous day in Acts 23:6–10.)
3. How do the religious leaders become involved in this plot? (vv. 14–15, 20)
4. What factors make this conspiracy a credible threat to Paul? (vv. 12–15, 20;  * Jn. 16:1–3)
5. Paul's nephew brings him news of this deadly conspiracy.
 - a. What temptations might Paul have faced upon hearing this news?
 - b. What assurance could Paul cling to during this extremely frightening time? (23:11)
 - c. Describe a time when God has met you in the midst of your troubles or temptations.

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

6. Fill in the blanks to see how many people God mobilizes to protect Paul from these bloodthirsty men.

Long before Paul arrives in Jerusalem he asked the _____ in Rome (Rom. 15:30–32) to pray for his safety. Then, in answer to their prayers, Paul’s _____ (v. 16a) hears of the plot the Jews are hatching. He makes his way to the barracks to tell Paul who calls for one of the _____ (v. 17). This man takes Paul’s nephew to the _____ (v. 18) of the barracks. He then orders _____ soldiers (v. 23), _____ horsemen and _____ spearmen to take Paul to Caesarea under cloak of darkness to _____ (v. 24).

7. Claudius Lysias’s letter summarizes what has been happening with Paul in Jerusalem.

a. What is his earthly perspective on how Paul is rescued? (v. 27)

b. How does he view the problem the Jews have with Paul? (v. 29a)

c. What is his judgment concerning Paul? (v. 29b)

8. Paul seems totally vulnerable to the hostility of the religious zealots in Jerusalem. Once in Caesarea, he will be in the hands of Felix, "a cruel, corrupt and avaricious [extremely greedy] governor."¹ What has prepared him for these challenges to his faith?

Acts 9:15–16

Acts 20:22–24

Acts 21:10–13

 2 Tim. 1:8–9

9. Concerning these events, commentator William J. Larkin writes, "A destructive momentum developed that appeared unstoppable."² Why does this plot never have a chance of succeeding? (23:11; Job 5:12-16; Ps. 33:10-11; Prov. 19:21)

10. Acts is the story of the gospel going forth and God’s kingdom expanding as people are being saved and transformed. Behind the scenes is God’s ultimate enemy, Satan, who from the beginning³ sought to thwart God’s purposes by whatever means possible. How is your own faith strengthened as you consider God’s power to accomplish his purposes no matter what the odds?

Look for ways that God answers your prayers and accomplishes his purposes in ways you never could have anticipated.

¹ Thomas Walker, *Acts of the Apostles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 527.

² William J. Larkin, Ed. Philip W. Comfort, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Acts* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2006), 605.

³ Genesis 3:1-15