

1. Review/Introduction

- Paul arrived in Jerusalem. He told the believers there of all the wonderful things God was doing among the Gentiles, and they all rejoiced.
- But devout Jews who didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah were angry at Paul for his association with Gentiles and accused him of preaching against the Law and of taking a Gentile into a forbidden area of the Temple.
- The Jews grabbed Paul, beat him, and tried to kill him until the Roman commander heard of it and intervened.
- Paul was put in chains and then addressed the angry crowd. He told them his testimony, but when he said the Lord sent him to tell the Gentiles about Jesus, they started yelling to have him killed!
- The Roman commander took Paul into custody and the next day ordered that he stand before the Jewish high council.

2. Text: Acts 23:1-35

- **High council** (Sanhedrin): A supreme council of 71 men that convened at the Jerusalem Temple which was made up of Jewish religious and political leaders. (Made up of elders, priests, teachers, Pharisees, Sadducees) They made final decisions on matters related to Jewish customs and religious law.
- **Pharisees**: Jewish religious leaders that oversaw synagogues that focused on knowing and following the law that God gave to Moses as well as religious oral traditions passed down through the years. Did not believe Jesus was the Messiah.
- **Sadducees**: Jewish religious leaders that also oversaw synagogues, but they were not as devoted to following the law as the Pharisees and were open to taking on Greek culture. They were wealthy men who were led less by Scripture and more by politics, money, and power; and they had closer ties with the local Roman government officials. Did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

Acts 23:1-11

- Paul realized he wasn't going to have a fair trial that day, so instead he got the Pharisees and Sadducees arguing!
- The Lord assured Paul he would **live** and preach the Good News in Rome.

Acts 23:12-22

- More than 40 men made an oath to not eat or drink until they **killed** Paul.
- That evil plot did not slip past the **all-knowing** God.

Acts 23:23-35

- **470** soldiers were assigned to protect Paul as he left Jerusalem!
 - The Roman commander sent Paul to Caesarea that night to get him safely to Governor Felix and avoid the assassination plot.
- Next week, we'll hear about Paul's appearance and defense before Governor Felix and his accusers.

3. Application

- **Despite many unfair circumstances and difficulties, Paul experienced peace and fulfillment in his life. I wonder how much more we would enjoy life - and experience the "abundant life" that Jesus said He came to give - if life wasn't "all about us", but instead, was all about being a fully-devoted disciple of Jesus?**
 - James 1:2-4 "Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. **3** For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. **4** So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing."
 - Philippians 3:7-8 "I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. **8** Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ **9** and become one with him."

Paul's aim was to "know Christ" more and more. To be a more **fully devoted disciple** of Jesus:

- To be Godly in all circumstances.
- Not to live long, but to pursue a Godly life as long as he lived!
- To be consumed with changing his own behavior rather than other people's behavior.
- To introduce as many people as possible to Jesus!