

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. We hope you are well and discovering new ways to relate to God and His Word.

"DEUS PRO NOBIS" | ACTS 23 | PASTOR BRIAN

WARM-UP QUESTION:

If you could pick a branch of the military or special operations unit to rescue you, which would you pick and why?

"Wisdom" - (Acts 23: 1-10)

God gives Paul the ability to quickly answer and create confusion in his accusers while he's on trial, showing wisdom. Who is someone else that you think of who has a similar ability? How does someone develop this gift?

"A Promise" - (Acts 23: 11)

God tells Paul to have courage because he will get to Rome to testify about him. What is it about God's promises that give people courage and hope?

"A Nephew and a Letter" - (Acts 23: 12-35)

Paul's nephew warns the officer of a plot and so he sends Paul with a letter and an entourage to another official for protection. How has God protected and provided for you in unexpected ways recently?

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Paul wrote in Romans 8:31 "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Paul suffered from all kinds of accusations and attacks, but he also saw God rescue him and use these situations for good. Do your prayers and actions show you believe God is for you lately? Have you thanked Him for His Providence?

Deus Pro Nobis

I. Slide1,2 **Announce:**

- A. Slide3-5 **Andrew:** Night of Worship. **Men's Breakfast.** **Perspectives.**
- B. Slide6 Our friend **Natalie Bither** went to be with the Lord last week. We will have a **Memorial** for her **Tuesday at noon** here in the sanctuary & live on HEF FB page.
- C. Slide7 Next Sunday 1/3 - **Year End Review.** We're gonna start the year by **Reflecting on the Blessings of 2020.** And **communion** together. **Year of Change, Season of Hope.**
- D. Prayer:

II. Slide8a **Intro: Deus Pro Nobis**

- A. **Quick Catch up** (last 2 ch's) - Paul made it to Jerusalem. He shares what God was doing among the Gentiles. The Jews from up north say, *he's against "us Jews, the Law, & the Temple"*. They then turn into *a zombie mob* & put a beating on Paul. **He gets rescued by CL's men & carried up the steps of the Antonia Fortress.** At the top he says, *may I speak*. He does and *all is calm, all is bright until it wasn't*. Paul drops the **G-word** Goyim/Gentile. Ordered into the barracks where they could waterboard him, then he drops his *Platinum Citizenship Card* (oops he's a Roman). **Now** we pick up Paul facing *The Council/Sanhedrin*.
 1. **Claudius L** thought for sure **the Council** would get it to the bottom of this.
 2. Paul gives **5** defense speeches: **2 in Jer, 3 in Caesarea.** This is 1st in Cs.
- B. Slide8b Place your focus this morning on 1 thing... **the Providence of God.**
 1. **Providence** (is to *see before*) *Lt. providere: pro/before - videre/to see*
 - a) Ps.34:6-8 *In my desperation I prayed, and the Lord listened; he saved me from all my troubles. 7 For the angel of the Lord is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear him.*
 2. Slide8c The Latin phrase, **Deus pro nobis**, translates, **God for us.**
 - a) Because that's what the doctrine of **providence** is all about. It's God being for his people. Paul said, *if God is for us who can be against us.* Rm.8:31

C. Let's watch the many ways God works *Provisionally* in Paul's life.

God uses: *Wisdom, a Promise, a Nephew, & a Letter.*

III. Slide9a **WISDOM (1-10)**

A. Paul's Personal Approach (1-5)

B.(1) A normal address to the Sanhedrin was, *Rulers of the people & Elders of Israel.*
He put them on equal footing ... **brothers.**

C. **Lived...in all good conscience** - Paul's saying, *I'm innocent. Or... If the glove don't fit, you must acquit!*

1. **Slide9b** Paul uses **conscience** many times [twice in Acts. 21x's in his letters]

a) It **approves** when we do right & **disapproves** when we do wrong.

b) It does not **set** the standard, it only **applies** it.

2. **But** I think it was **up to this day** that **Ananias** lost his mind. [I've been a good Jew all my life, having a good conscience, even now as a **Christian**]

D.(2) **Getting slapped** - you know you're supposed *to turn the cheek*, **but** often when you're slapped...that verse flies out the other side.

E. (3) I think Paul's point is - you're supposed to *uphold the law* **but** you *broke the law* **because** I haven't been condemned yet, **and** you are already punishing me.

F. **Sanhedrin** - came from when Moses raised up 70 leaders to help him rule, and he ruled at the top. Later the Jews called this *the Sanhedrin* & whoever ruled at the top was considered like Moses. So you *should not yell* at the guy in Moses' position.

G.(2-5) **Was this Holy Sarcasm? Or, eye trouble?**

1. **Some think ... Eye trouble, thus** he couldn't see it was him.

a) **Did he really not see him?** *The meeting was thrown together quickly maybe the high priest didn't have on his typical royal robe?* [would you recognize the Pope in shorts, sitting by a pool, reading a newspaper?]

b) **Or** with 70 people in the room, bad eyesight, a lot of men in robes, he couldn't identify who said it?

2. **Others think ... Holy Sarcasm.**

a) Paul knew very well that Ananias was High Priest.

b) He was one of the **most corrupt men** ever to be a high priest. [He stole tithes from other priests]

3. **But**, he does apologize, because of *what God's Word says*.

H. **Slide9c Paul's Conversation Grenade** (6-10) [ever drop one?]

I. Paul **pulls the pin** and then says vs.6b. When he finishes you hear a *drop - clink, clink, clink, Kaboom!*

1. **Absolutely clever**. This would be as fun as having **a Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian & a Baptist** in a meeting, **then** bringing up **Baptism & the Lords Supper**.

J. **Slide9d** Oh and don't miss it, *it's the Resurrection that is on trial, not Paul*. (6b)

1. And it is still **what divides**. And it still is **the issue**, **16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.** 1 Cor.15:16-19

2. The Sadducees **didn't** believe in the resurrection, which is why we said in Sunday School, it's why they were **Sad-u-see**.

K. Then after this Paul's like, *what? I don't know why they're like this*, ha!

L. So, the Lord 1st sent **Wisdom** to the Rescue for Paul. **Now** a **Promise** to the Rescue.

IV. **Slide10a A PROMISE (11)**

A.(11) The Lord gives Paul both **Commendation & Confidence**.

B. **Take courage** = to be brave. *Here is Jesus cheering*.

1. **Slide10b** G.K.Chesterton said, **Courage is almost a contradiction in terms. It means a strong desire to live, taking the form of a readiness to die.**¹

2. It's been said, **A pat on the back is only a few vertebrae removed from a kick in the pants, but is miles ahead in results.**²

C. **Slide10c** So you **must** testify also in Rome – Think he'll make it to Rome??? *Yah! :)*

¹ G. K. Chesterton, Leadership, Vol. 10, no. 4.

² Ella Wheeler Wilcox. Leadership, Vol. 15, no. 3.

1. **Must** = be obliged to. expressing necessity.

2. I heard the 2 most important **musts** in scripture: Jn.3:14 **As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.** Jn.3:7 **You must be born again.**

D. Slide10d We could sum this vs.11 up with the **promise** of Jesus saying, *I know where you are* (when he came stood by Paul). *I know what you've done* (in Jer), *and I know & guarantee your future* (in Rome).

1. Saints, it's the same for you and I today.

E. The Lord 1st sent **Wisdom** to the Rescue for Paul. Then a **Promise**. Now a **Nephew**.

V. Slide11a **A NEPHEW (12-22)**

A. (12,13) **Wow**, How broken the whole religious scene had become by the *mid-1st-Century*. From a place of **trying to keep God's commands**, to such a *twisted view* that this is what **obeying God** looks like? **Or** is a good idea?

1. This sounds just like the **conspiracy against Julius Caesar** about 100 yrs earlier. These are **religious people**, and they were breaking **Slide11b 2 Commandments: Don't bear false witness, and Don't Murder people.**

B. Slide11c **God's Providence** - nothing miraculous here, **but** God is still protecting **His guy** & getting him where he needs to go. [can't relate to the *miraculous*, He shows us this]

1. Even the most careful and cunning of human plans cannot succeed **if God opposes them**. Slide11d **No weapon formed against you shall prosper**

2. On this occasion God's providential intervention involved Paul's nephew.

C. The Lord sent **Wisdom** to the Rescue for Paul, a **Promise**, a **Nephew**. Now a **Letter**.

VI. Slide12a **A LETTER (23-35)**

A. (23-25) The seat of Roman gov. was in **Caesarea**, **not** in *Jerusalem*.

1. **Imagine**, 2 centurions, 200 foot soldiers, 70 cavalry, 200 artillery men... 472 in all... **to guard little Paul**. [He calls for the Rangers, Delta Force, SEAL's, PJ's (Pararescue), & Marsoc **to guard lil Paul**]

a) Remember, when **Jesus** says **must**, He means **must**, **no matter what it takes!**

2. God has at His ready resource: any man, woman, child, beast, weather, king, peasant, believer/unbeliever, at His beckon call. [eg. large fish/Jonah, lil fish/coin, gefilte fish]
3. Sometimes God uses a young man (nephew), other times a Tank.

B. Slide12b (24) Felix the governor - *Marcus Antonius Felix* was the Roman governor of Judaea from ad 52-60. [he succeeded Pontius Pilate 26-36. then he was by Porcius Festus]

C.(31-35) Caesarea is 60 miles from Jerusalem.

D. Antipatris (anti-PATREES) is 25 miles shy of Caesarea [1/2 way point]

1. The reason some soldiers turned back at this point was because from Jerusalem to Antipatris it was heavily populated w/Jews & the land was very easy for an ambush. After Antipatris it was Gentile land & the terrain was very flat. [site of a significant Roman garrison that cud protect Paul overnight]

E. It was the Lord that was going to get Paul to Rome to witness for Him.

1. Slide12c George Whitefield said, *Man is immortal until his work is done.*
2. God gave Paul Wisdom, a Promise, a Nephew and a Letter to make sure it happened.
 - a) Do you recognize the Lord revealing any these things in your life? Keep an eye out for them. And when you recognize them, recognize Him! (w/thanks)

F. Slide12d *Don't Freak Out.* Look how God calmed Paul in a very stressful situation. *Keep Calm & Carry On. - Keep Calm & put Bacon on.*

1. Ultimately *Keep Calm* because *God is in control even when we're going through trials.*

G. Slide13 Last point:

H. Is.54:16,17 *I have created the blacksmith who fans the coals beneath the forge and makes the weapons of destruction. And I have created the armies that destroy. But in that coming day no weapon turned against you will succeed ...* (no weapon formed...)

- I. We are Bullet-Proof-Believers. There is no promise of *immunity from attack*, but the final triumph of the truth is assured.
1. It's painful to go through the furnace, but God uses the experience to make you *a stronger & better tool*. Are you being forged in God's furnaces?
 - a) **Reminder**, not only is the **fire** & its **temperature** in God's hand, but *even the Blacksmith is under His control*.
 - b) That means the *amount of blows*, *how frequent they come*, & the *muscle of their impact*...are all tempered by Him. He does have the last word!
- J. Keywords: Deus Pro Nobis, Paul, Acts 23, Sanhedrin, the Council, providence, wisdom, conscience, resurrection, courage, Caesarea, Antipatris, George Whitefield.