



# Brown CG Discussion Guide

“As you are going”: Acts 21:18-23:35– Sep 26, 2021

Paul has been traveling around, causing trouble. How did he cause trouble? Now he's returning home, or so he thought. . . We'll observe Paul at his trouble-making Best!

**Acts 21:** <sup>17</sup> When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us warmly. <sup>18</sup> The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. <sup>19</sup> Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

<sup>20</sup> When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. <sup>21</sup> They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. <sup>22</sup> What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, <sup>23</sup> so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. <sup>24</sup> Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. <sup>25</sup> As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.”

<sup>26</sup> The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.

## Paul Arrested

<sup>27</sup> When the seven days were nearly over, <sup>27</sup> Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, <sup>28</sup> shouting, “Fellow Israelites, help us! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place.” <sup>29</sup> (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.)

<sup>30</sup> The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. <sup>31</sup> While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. <sup>32</sup> He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

<sup>33</sup> The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. <sup>34</sup> Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. <sup>35</sup> When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers. <sup>36</sup> The crowd that followed kept shouting, “Get rid of him!”

## Paul Speaks to the Crowd

<sup>37</sup> As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, “May I say something to you?”

“Do you speak Greek?” he replied. <sup>38</sup> “Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the wilderness some time ago?”

<sup>39</sup> Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people."

<sup>40</sup> After receiving the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic<sup>[a]</sup>:

**22** <sup>1</sup> "Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense."

<sup>2</sup> When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet.

Then Paul said: <sup>3</sup> "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. <sup>4</sup> I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, <sup>5</sup> as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

<sup>6</sup> "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. <sup>7</sup> I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?'

<sup>8</sup> "'Who are you, Lord?' I asked.

" 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. <sup>9</sup> My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

<sup>10</sup> "'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked.

" 'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.' <sup>11</sup> My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

<sup>12</sup> "A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. <sup>13</sup> He stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very moment I was able to see him.

<sup>14</sup> "Then he said: 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. <sup>15</sup> You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup> And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'

<sup>17</sup> "When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance <sup>18</sup> and saw the Lord speaking to me. 'Quick!' he said. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.'

<sup>19</sup> "'Lord,' I replied, 'these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. <sup>20</sup> And when the blood of your martyr<sup>[a]</sup> Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'

<sup>21</sup> "Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.' "

### **Paul the Roman Citizen**

<sup>22</sup> The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!"

<sup>23</sup> As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, <sup>24</sup> the commander ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and interrogated in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this. <sup>25</sup> As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"

<sup>26</sup> When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. "What are you going to do?" he asked. "This man is a Roman citizen."

<sup>27</sup> The commander went to Paul and asked, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?"

"Yes, I am," he answered.

<sup>28</sup> Then the commander said, "I had to pay a lot of money for my citizenship."

"But I was born a citizen," Paul replied.

<sup>29</sup> Those who were about to interrogate him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.

### **Paul Before the Sanhedrin**

<sup>30</sup> The commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews. So the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the members of the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.

**23** Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day." <sup>2</sup> At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. <sup>3</sup> Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!"

<sup>4</sup> Those who were standing near Paul said, "How dare you insult God's high priest!"

<sup>5</sup> Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'<sup>[a]</sup>"

<sup>6</sup> Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead." <sup>7</sup> When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. <sup>8</sup> (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)

<sup>9</sup> There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. "We find nothing wrong with this man," they said. "What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" <sup>10</sup> The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.

<sup>11</sup> The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

### **The Plot to Kill Paul**

<sup>12</sup> The next morning some Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. <sup>13</sup> More than forty men were involved in this plot. <sup>14</sup> They went to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. <sup>15</sup> Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here."

<sup>16</sup> But when the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul.

<sup>17</sup> Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him." <sup>18</sup> So he took him to the commander.

The centurion said, "Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you."

<sup>19</sup> The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?"

<sup>20</sup> He said: "Some Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. <sup>21</sup> Don't give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request."

<sup>22</sup> The commander dismissed the young man with this warning: "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me."

### **Paul Transferred to Caesarea**

<sup>23</sup> Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, "Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen<sup>[b]</sup> to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. <sup>24</sup> Provide horses for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix."

<sup>25</sup> He wrote a letter as follows: <sup>26</sup> Claudius Lysias, To His Excellency, Governor Felix:

Greetings.<sup>27</sup> This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen. <sup>28</sup> I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin. <sup>29</sup> I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment. <sup>30</sup> When I was informed of a plot to be carried out against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also ordered his accusers to present to you their case against him.

<sup>31</sup> So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris. <sup>32</sup> The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. <sup>33</sup> When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. <sup>34</sup> The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, <sup>35</sup> he said, "I will hear your case when your accusers get here." Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod's palace.

We live in a crazy world. While not in the same way as what Paul experienced, it brings its challenges, its hardships. While our lives are not yet threatened, we certainly need prayer and God's help. What a blessing that we have our CG, fellow believers who care, to share our lives, our victories, our problems, our needs.