

# DESTINATION: ROME

## ACTS 22.30-24.9



T. M. MOORE

*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

Destination: Rome Acts 22,30-24,9  
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Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing  
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## Introduction to Acts 22.30-24.9

Paul wrote to the Romans from Corinth advising them that he was planning to head their way after he delivered the gift to the Christians in Jerusalem (Rom. 15).

He was right, but he could not have imagined how King Jesus would accomplish that journey.

Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, and subsequent deliverance to Caesarea, is a study in the grace of God. God uses even His enemies to accomplish His purposes. We can't always see the ways God's sovereignty is being expressed, but we can always *rely* on it. He does all things well and for our good, even if the road is a little bumpy along the way.

Just ask Paul.

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We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

## 1 Law-abiding Still

*Read and meditate on Acts 22.30-23.5.*

Paul finds himself in the strange situation of being under two sorts of law at once – Roman and Jewish. But he is able to cope with the situation, even if his accusers are not.

*For reflection*

1. Paul may have been guilty of speaking before being spoken to here, and that may explain the high priest's action of having him slapped. But that was out of bounds; he could have just motioned for him to wait. What do you suppose the high priest intended to accomplish by this action? Do you ever experience anything "pre-emptive" like this from people who are hostile to the Gospel?

2. Paul explodes. He can bear the inconsistency and hypocrisy of this situation no longer. The priest intends to judge him by the law of the Jews, yet contrary to that law he has Paul struck? Oh no, I don't think so. Here's a basic apologetic tactic: Confront people with their inconsistencies, hypocrisies, and lapses of logic. Can you think of ways this might apply to sharing the Gospel with someone?

3. But then Paul himself is reminded that his outburst put him in danger of reviling a ruler of the people, so he backed down, citing the Law of God (Ex. 22.28) to show that, contrary to what has been reported of him, he is a man who abides by the Law of God. Paul saw no conflict between Law and grace. In the life of faith these work together to accomplish the holy and righteous and good purposes of God. The Apostle of grace was a man under the Law – not *unto* salvation, but *for the sake* of it. What's the difference?

4. It's interesting to note how often Paul mentions the conscience, and specifically, *his* conscience in Acts and elsewhere. The conscience is the referee of the soul, arbitrating between thoughts and affections according to the Law and Word of God. What Paul is saying is that his conscience is telling him that he is in the right, having continuously submitted his life to the scrutiny of God and His Word. We should all strive to be in such a place. What does it mean to live in *good conscience* before God and people?

5. Do you take time, in your walk with the Lord, for the Spirit to search and adjust your conscience? What can we do to help make sure we are as confident about our conscience as Paul was about his?

*Summary*

Paul's trial got off on the wrong foot, and he had to dance a bit to keep from getting stomped. But we'll see he is adept at dealing with troubling situations. The Spirit worked within him in just the right ways. How might you expect the Spirit to help you in a situation where you have the opportunity to speak a word about the Lord?

*Closing Prayer*

For You *are* not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness,  
Nor shall evil dwell with You.  
The boastful shall not stand in Your sight;

You hate all workers of iniquity.  
You shall destroy those who speak falsehood;  
The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.  
But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy;  
In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.  
Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies;  
Make Your way straight before my face.

Psalm 5.4-8

## 2 Divide and Delay

*Read and meditate on Acts 23.6-10.*

Paul quickly sized up this situation. His brain must have been going a hundred miles an hour: How to get out of this mess?

*For reflection*

1. Paul took the initiative. He framed the question in his favor by shifting the accusations against him – even though they were false – into a positive mode and declaring himself to be a Pharisee and on trial for the beliefs of that party. Everything Paul said was true. We might be inclined to consider his tactic as somewhat pragmatic. But remember: Paul could not have known what might happen next. Is there another way of explaining what Paul was trying to do here?
2. Well, what were the Pharisees to do? Deny their beliefs? Condemn a man who held them (most of them doubtless had no clue why they had been assembled anyway)? They were not about to give the Sadducees even a small victory here, so they were ready to dismiss the charges and the case. Is it a good idea for believers to try to make common cause, or find common ground, with unbelievers? Explain.
3. The Sadducees were not about to dismiss Paul's case. They could not just deny their own views (they didn't believe in the resurrection) and let the Pharisees grab the laurel wreath. So now everyone began shouting, but at least they were shouting at one another and not at Paul. Pretty soon things turn violent, and the Romans became worried, and not just about Paul. What does this situation teach us about how much lost people need the Gospel?
4. So the Romans rescued Paul from the scene and delivered him back to the barracks. We can imagine the Romans were becoming not a little put out over this situation, what with all this mustering and rescuing and the like. The tribune was undoubtedly trying to find a way out of this mess, one that wouldn't disturb the overall peace of the city. By dividing the house, Paul delayed any immediate action on his case. Pitting the various sects of Jewish leadership against one another was something Jesus was good at, too. Better they're angry and arguing with one another than with us. Right?
5. We might think that Paul, in making his declaration before the court, was being a bit disingenuous. It's more accurate to say he spoke as much of the truth about himself as the situation called for. He was, indeed, a Pharisee, and he certainly believed in the resurrection and the hope of the fathers. This, he reckoned, was not the time for a Gospel message. What are some ways that you could identify with unbelievers in your life – find some common cause or common ground – without sharing the Gospel with them? What do you have in common with any unbelievers that might serve as a basis or bridge for a later conversation about Jesus?

*Summary*

Paul simply stated the truth about his situation, but he was careful to frame his defense to establish some common ground with at least some of the court. It's a good idea to know as much as we can about the people to whom we intend to bear witness. Why?

*Closing Prayer*

My defense *is* of God,  
Who saves the upright in heart.  
God *is* a just judge,  
And God is angry *with the wicked* every day.  
If he does not turn back,  
He will sharpen His sword;  
He bends His bow and makes it ready.  
He also prepares for Himself instruments of death;  
He makes His arrows into fiery shafts.  
Behold, *the wicked* brings forth iniquity;  
Yes, he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood.  
He made a pit and dug it out,  
And has fallen into the ditch *which* he made.  
His trouble shall return upon his own head,  
And his violent dealing shall come down on his own crown.  
I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness,  
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

Psalm 7.10-17

### 3 “Hang in There!”

*Read and meditate on Acts 23.11.*

This encounter with the Lord Jesus is interesting primarily for what it *doesn't* include.

*For reflection*

1. We note that Jesus does not extricate Paul from this situation, as He had done for Peter and others of the apostles. He is content to let Paul stay put. Why?
2. Jesus was arranging the details of Paul's safe and economical transport to Rome. Paul had already by this time told the Romans he was planning to come to see them (Rom. 15). That would have meant a good bit of expense for him and probably Luke and maybe one or two others. What better way to get to Rome free of charge than on the Romans' lira? How can you see the sovereignty of God at work in this situation? Is Jesus sovereign still today? But can we always discern the ways of His sovereign working?
3. Plus, along the way, there will be opportunities for bearing witness before governors and a king that Paul might otherwise not have had. Paul would get to Rome, as was his objective, but not as he had planned. For now, he needed to be patient and hang in there. Jesus is the Lord of our plans, not we. How does Paul's experience of Jesus' sovereignty counsel you in waiting on the Lord?
4. And notice also the *content* of Paul's testimony, as Jesus commanded it: Not his *experience*, that is, not merely some subjective report about how believing in Jesus made him *feel*. Paul was to testify the *facts* about Jesus, and this included the facts of his own experience as well as the historical facts of Jesus life, death, and resurrection. The Gospel is grounded in objective, historical facts; and its transforming power in our lives is another fact which demonstrates the truth of what we proclaim. Paul was undoubtedly greatly reassured by this encounter with Lord. Wouldn't you have been? How do Jesus' words to Paul encourage you in your witness for the Lord?
5. Jesus here endorsed Paul's apostleship and his ministry. Luke or others may have witnessed this encounter, but even if they didn't, they certainly would have taken Paul's word for it. Paul had been saved and called in order to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, and to the center of Gentile civilization he would certainly go. Is Jesus speaking to us in His Word as reliable as if He spoke to us in a vision by night? Explain.

*Summary*

Paul was not concerned about the external circumstances in which he'd become enmeshed. His will was always to do the Lord's will, and this vision from the Lord would have been enormously reassuring. Can you think of some passages of God's Word that guide and assure you day by day concerning your own mission from the Lord?

*Closing Prayer*

I will praise *You*, O LORD, with my whole heart;  
I will tell of all Your marvelous works.  
I will be glad and rejoice in You;

I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High...  
Have mercy on me, O LORD!  
Consider my trouble from those who hate me,  
You who lift me up from the gates of death,  
That I may tell of all Your praise  
In the gates of the daughter of Zion.  
I will rejoice in Your salvation.

Psalm 9.1, 2, 13, 14

## 4 Oh, Right, Another Plot

*Read and meditate on Acts 23.12-22.*

Very shortly, there are going to be some very hungry Jews in Jerusalem. Approximately, “more than forty.”

*For reflection*

1. Do you think the hosts in heaven chuckled a bit at this ridiculous oath? But their action shows that hatred of Paul was widespread, wherever he'd been or was. People wanted him dead, and even the religious leaders of the people were willing to conspire with this murderous plot. Standing for the Gospel is serious business. How do you prepare for this work each day?
2. So how did Paul's nephew find out about this? We don't know. And why were the Romans so willing to receive his report and believe it? Would we not have expected Roman bravado to say, “We can handle this, young man”? Again, what can we learn about the sovereignty of the Lord in the work of the Gospel? Do you think His sovereignty is at work for you in ways like this? Explain.
3. The report of this plot, true or not, was the tribune's chance to be done with this man and his troublesome presence. The tribune immediately made preparations to move Paul out of the city. Meanwhile, are those grumbling tummies we hear in the background? Put yourself in Paul's place at this time, following the vision he'd had of Christ. How do you suppose he was feeling about all this?
4. Paul knew Jesus had told him he was going to Rome. But that didn't mean he didn't have to take some responsibility, as far as he was able, for getting there. He could have just told his nephew not to worry, Jesus had appeared to him, he was going to Rome, and all would be well. But Jesus works through human beings, and He expects us to take responsibility for our actions within the framework of His will, which is what we see Paul doing here. Relate this to the Personal Mission Field to which the Lord has sent you.
5. When it comes to being a witness for the Lord (Acts 1.8), what responsibilities does this require of you?

*Summary*

The Lord Jesus begins moving the pieces in the game of getting Paul to Rome safely and economically. How should this story of Paul encourage us in our walk with and work for the Lord?

*Closing Prayer*

The earth *is* the LORD's, and all its fullness,  
The world and those who dwell therein.  
For He has founded it upon the seas,  
And established it upon the waters.  
Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?  
Or who may stand in His holy place?  
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol,

Nor sworn deceitfully.  
He shall receive blessing from the LORD,  
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.  
This *is* Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him,  
Who seek Your face.

Psalm 24.1-6

## 5 Handoff

*Read and meditate on Acts 23.23-30.*

I rather suspect that Claudius Lysias was happy to learn about this plot to assassinate Paul. It gave him the opportunity he needed for two things: First to handoff the apostle to higher authorities, and second, to flatter the local governor with the suggestion of his superior judging powers. Ah, Roman pragmatism – kings hearts in the hands of the Lord!

*For reflection*

1. Claudius also took the threat seriously, as we see by his mustering nearly 500 soldiers to accompany Paul to Caesarea. How powerful must the Roman garrison in Jerusalem have been, that they could dispatch 500 soldiers north and still have enough power in place to maintain order? How powerful is the Lord Who marshalled the troops of His enemy to do His bidding? Does he marshal forces to guard and guide us?
2. Note Claudius' opening words to Felix: "Greetings." Sort of like "Dear \_\_\_\_" today. If you look at Roman correspondence from this period, this is a typical opening line, either "Greetings" or "Greetings and good health." Compare that with the way Paul began his letters: "Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The Gospel changes everything, even down to the most mundane social protocols. How do you express the difference the Gospel makes in your own social protocols?
3. And for the sake of getting the Gospel to Rome, King Jesus mustered Roman military power to begin Paul's westward journey. How cool is that? The common grace of God was at work in that Roman force, ensuring safe passage for the Lord's missionary. What are some ways the common grace of God works to the advantage of the Church in our day? How should this affect our prayers?
4. It's clear the tribune doesn't understand what all the fuss is concerning Paul. Yes, matters of Jewish law had come into view – Paul had brought them into the fray. But it was for the Gospel that Paul was being threatened with his life. No matter. He was ready to die, if need be, for the faith of King Jesus. Although he must have been not a little amused to see how his plan to go to Rome was beginning to be accomplished. What can we learn from Paul about resting in the Lord's work, while we attend to the work He has appointed for us?
5. What does it mean to be "ready to die" for the Gospel? Would you describe yourself as ready to die for the Gospel? Why or why not?

*Summary*

In this story we are seeing just how powerful Jesus is to accomplish His Kingdom purposes. Look at the way He overruled the Jewish court, revealed the plot to assassinate Paul, and mustered the Romans to protect His witness. What should we learn from all this? How should this encourage us in our own calling from the Lord?

*Closing Prayer*

Hear my cry, O God;

Attend to my prayer.  
From the end of the earth I will cry to You,  
When my heart is overwhelmed;  
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.  
For You have been a shelter for me,  
A strong tower from the enemy.  
I will abide in Your tabernacle forever;  
I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. *Selah*  
For You, O God, have heard my vows;  
You have given *me* the heritage of those who fear Your name.  
You will prolong the king's life,  
His years as many generations.  
He shall abide before God forever.  
Oh, prepare mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him!  
So I will sing praise to Your name forever,  
That I may daily perform my vows.

Psalm 61.1-8

## 6 To Caesarea

*Read and meditate on Acts 23.31-35.*

The first leg of Paul's journey to Rome is complete. It's probably the case that Paul didn't know this situation would end him up in Rome, although it's possible he may have hoped it would. He certainly, as we shall see, will soon enough play his citizenship trump card to get himself there.

*For reflection*

1. Felix received him and inquired about his citizenship and provenance, and promised a hearing once his accusers had arrived. Perfectly orderly: Felix wouldn't hear the case, or any more of the details than what Claudius related, until all parties were present. Roman order in the service of the Gospel. Should Christians try to use civil law and government to the advantage of the Gospel? Explain.
2. Paul was kept in a prison in Herod's palace, which probably suggests he was not regarded as a threat. He would have been safe there and would enjoy considerable deference and hospitality for two years. Meanwhile, we can only wonder about those poor, hungry blokes back in Jerusalem. Why do you suppose the Lord was giving Paul this "time off" from active ministry? Was it really time off, or just a change of venue and procedure? Explain.
3. Again we can see that Luke is a reliable historian. His attention to details – Roman protocol, places, individual people, contemporary social protocols, laws – help to bring reality to his story. Sometimes I get the impression Christians think the events of the Bible occurred in some kind of time other than the time/space continuum in which we live – "Bible time", or something like that. Do you ever feel that way? Explain.
4. But the Kingdom of God unfolds in real time, real history, and all history's players and places are at the Lord's disposal for His Kingdom purposes. Amazing. Do you consider yourself to be at the Lord's disposal for His Kingdom purposes *at all times*? Explain.
5. In what ways can you see the Lord using the players and places of history to advance His Kingdom today?

*Summary*

The action slows down a bit and we catch our breath as we await the next stage of this ongoing conflict. We're not hearing much from Paul at this stage, but we know he must be thinking about what's going to happen next. How do you imagine Paul managed to hold up under all this pressure and uncertainty? What counsel is there for us in his example?

*Closing Prayer*

Save me, O God, by Your name,  
And vindicate me by Your strength.  
Hear my prayer, O God;  
Give ear to the words of my mouth.  
For strangers have risen up against me,

And oppressors have sought after my life;  
They have not set God before them. *Selab*  
Behold, God *is* my helper;  
The Lord *is* with those who uphold my life.  
He will repay my enemies for their evil.  
Cut them off in Your truth.  
I will freely sacrifice to You;  
I will praise Your name, O LORD, for *it is* good.  
For He has delivered me out of all trouble;  
And my eye has seen *its desire* upon my enemies.

Psalm 54.1-7

## 7 Like He Says

*Read and meditate on Acts 24.1-9.*

The Jewish leaders have engaged a Roman lawyer to plead their case. They've had five days to prepare – five days. And this is their case? Innuendo? Hearsay?

*For reflection*

1. Where's their evidence (Paul will get them on that)? How about witnesses for the defense? Were they deposed? Are they to be allowed? Can you see how, in the common grace of God, law can serve to restrain bully and bluster? Explain.
2. Tertullus tried to flatter the governor, hoping for a quick judgment and an easy paycheck. The Jews do what Jews did in those days – chime in with “Like he says!” and assorted denunciations and threats. Tertullus invited the governor to “examine” Paul, but I don't think he really expected him to do so. He misjudged Felix, for that is exactly what the governor turned to do, as we shall see. Rome persecuted Christians. But Roman government was a servant of God for good, as we see in this story of Paul (Rom. 13.1-4). How does this counsel us in thinking about government in our day?
3. Felix intended to offer Paul a fair hearing and all the protection of Roman law. We can see the common grace of God at work here, restraining by civil statute and authority the evil intentions of wicked men. The enemies of the Gospel will always find that they can only act as God permits. They are at all times constrained by His Word and purposes. “Like He says.” How should this encourage us in our own work as witnesses for the Lord?
4. We expect to encounter opposition as we share the Good News of Jesus with people around us. What can we learn from Paul about being faithful, patient, and fearless in the face of such threats?
5. Paul wrote that government is a servant of God for good (Rom. 13.1-4). Can you see how that is the case in this situation? How can you see this in our own government today? Should Christians work to make sure that public policy is according to the Word of God? How?

*Summary*

This little flourish by Tertullus – big city lawyer trying to impress regional governor – did not accomplish the desired effect. But it set the stage for Paul's testimony, as we shall see. Paul was alert to what was going on around him, and always looking for the best way to make others' words and deeds work for Christ and the Gospel. Paul is preparing his witness just by remaining silent and letting others speak. How does this counsel us as we seek to share the Good News with people in our Personal Mission Fields?

*Closing Prayer*

Truly my soul silently *waits* for God;  
From Him *comes* my salvation.  
He only *is* my rock and my salvation;  
*He is* my defense;  
I shall not be greatly moved.

How long will you attack a man?  
You shall be slain, all of you,  
Like a leaning wall and a tottering fence.  
They only consult to cast *him* down from his high position;  
They delight in lies;  
They bless with their mouth,  
But they curse inwardly. *Selah*  
My soul, wait silently for God alone,  
For my expectation *is* from Him.  
He only *is* my rock and my salvation;  
*He is* my defense;  
I shall not be moved.  
In God *is* my salvation and my glory;  
The rock of my strength,  
*And* my refuge, *is* in God.

Psalm 62.1-7

*For reflection or discussion*

1. Summarize the ways we have seen Christ sovereignly at work in the situations described in this section. How is it clear that He is completely in charge of events?
2. Most of the talking in this section is by people who don't know the Lord and don't like the Lord's witnesses. What's Paul doing all this time? Is it a bad thing to encourage those we're trying to witness to to express their views? Explain.
3. What do we mean by common grace? In what ways does common grace work on behalf of God's people in our day? How should we respond to these evidences of common grace?
4. What are you learning from this part of Acts about working your own Personal Mission Field?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from Acts 22.30-24.9?

*Glory to Glory*

We are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ *from* the glory we encounter in God's Word *to* the way we live for His glory in the world (2 Cor. 3.12-18; 1 Cor. 10.31).

What have you encountered *of* God's glory in our reading and meditations in this week's studies? How has He shown Himself *to* you more clearly? How can this help you live more consistently *for* His glory in the daily details of your life?

What have you learned about yourself from Acts 22.30-24.9 to help you in knowing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom?

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