

Engaging Gospel Doctrine: 164
Lesson 38: “Thou Hast Testified of Me”

Link to Online Lesson: “[Thou Hast Testified of Me](#)”

Class Member Reading: Acts 21-28

Act 21-28: NRSV

Outline (Again from the ESV, the outlines are really great)

- VII. The Witness in Ephesus (18:23-21:16)
 - a. Priscilla and Aquila instruct Apollos (18:23-28)
 - b. Paul encounters disciples of John (19:1-10)
 - c. Paul encounters false religion at Ephesus (19:23-41)
 - d. Paul experiences violent opposition at Ephesus (19:23-41)
 - e. Paul travels to Miletus (20:7-16)
 - f. Paul addresses the Ephesian elders at Miletus (20:17-35)
 - g. Paul journeys to Jerusalem (20:36-21:16)
- VIII. The Arrest in Jerusalem (21:17-23:35)
 - a. Paul participates in a Nazirite ceremony (21:17-26)
 - b. An angry mob attacks Paul (21:27-39)
 - c. Paul addresses the Jewish crowd (21:40-22:21)
 - d. Paul reveals his Roman citizenship (22:22-29)
 - e. Paul appears before the Sanhedrin (22:30-23:11)
 - f. Zealous Jews plot against Paul (23:12-22)
 - g. Paul is delivered to the governor Felix (23:23-35)
- IX. The Witness in Caesarea (24:1-26:32)
 - a. Paul appears before Felix (24:1-27)
 - b. Paul appeals to Caesar (25:1-12)
 - c. Festus presents the case to King Agrippa II (25:13-22)
 - d. Paul witnesses to Agrippa II (25:23-26:32)
- X. The Witness in Rome (27:1-28:31)
 - a. Paul journeys to Rome by sea (27:1-44)
 - b. Paul witnesses on Malta (28:1-10)
 - c. Paul arrives in Rome (28:11-16)
 - d. Paul witnesses to the Jews in Rome (28:17-31)

Cast of characters: Usually this stuff would be Scripture Study material, but in this case it helps to know who’s who before digging into the reading. Luke is such a great storyteller... it is a pleasure reading his masterful work. Note the amount of direct speech, vibrant characters, building of tension, and Paul shining through it all.

“we” (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-8; 27:1-28:16)

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Philip and his daughters: One of the seven leaders selected to lead the church, had four daughters with the gift of prophecy.

James: Jesus’ brother who seems to have been the main leader of the Jerusalem Church (not the apostle James, son of Zebedee, who was killed in AD 44).

Ananias: Jewish High priest who presided when Paul was brought before the Council in Jerusalem, later lead a delegation from the Council to the governor in Caesarea to plead for Paul’s condemnation.

Claudias Lysias: A freedman (former slave who purchased his emancipation) who led a cohort of Roman troops in Jerusalem. He protects Paul against the mob actions of the Jews.

Felix (and his wife Jewish wife Drusilla, sister to Agrippa II and Berenice): Procurator of Palestine before Festus. Freed slave of the emperor Claudius (very unusual for a freed slave to hold such a high post).

Festus: Porcius Festus was Procurator of Judea (similar office as held by Pilate). He was a moderate leader who fought extremism and maintained good relations with Jewish leadership.

Agrippa (and Bernice): Herod Agrippa II, Marcus Julius Agrippa, raised in the emperor Claudius’ court. was king over cities in Syria and northern Palestine, minor mostly Gentile territories. He seems to have been interested in religion. Bernice was his sister (and apparently more as well).

Therefore the leadership is as follows:

Emperor Nero (under whom Paul and Peter were killed in about 64)

Felix/Festus (Roman official over Palestine)

Agrippa II (Jewish King over select territories)

Claudias Lysias (Roman military official in charge of Jerusalem)

Ananias (High priest over the temple)

Acts 21

1 When **we** had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 When we found a ship bound for Phoenicia, we went on board and set sail. 3 We came in sight of Cyprus; and leaving it on our left, we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, because the ship was to unload its cargo there. 4 We looked up the disciples and stayed there for seven days. Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. 5 When our days there were ended, we left and proceeded on our journey; and all of them, with wives and children, escorted us outside the city. There we knelt down on the beach and prayed 6 and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

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7 When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais; and we greeted the believers and stayed with them for one day. 8 The next day we left and came to Caesarea; and we went into the house of **Philip the evangelist**, one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy. 10 While we were staying there for several days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 He came to us and took Paul’s belt, bound his own feet and hands with it (**symbolic action**), and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.’” 12 When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and **breaking my heart**? **Empathy—even though Paul has a different perspective, his heart is pained because of the suffering of those who care about him.** For **I am ready** not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” 14 Since he would not be persuaded, **we remained silent except to say, “The Lord’s will be done.”**

15 After these days we got ready and started to go up to Jerusalem. 16 Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came along and brought us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to stay.

17 When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us warmly. 18 The next day Paul went with us to visit **James**; and all the elders were present. 19 After greeting them, **he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.** **An important theme of this reading is impacting others through telling our stories.** 20 When they heard it, they praised God. Then they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the law. 21 **They have been told about you** that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs. 22 What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. 23 So do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. 24 Join these men, go through the rite of purification with them, and pay for the shaving of their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself observe and guard the law. (**Paul was urged to take the Nazarite vow to demonstrate his loyalty to Judaism**) 25 But as for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication.” 26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having purified himself, he entered the temple with them, making public the completion of the days of purification when the sacrifice would be made for each of them.

27 When the seven days were almost completed, **the Jews from Asia, who had seen him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd.** They seized him, 28 shouting, “Fellow Israelites, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place; more than that, he has actually brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” 29 For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. 30 Then all the city was aroused, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. 31 While they were trying to kill him, word came to the **tribune of the cohort** that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 Immediately he took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. When they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 Then the tribune came, arrested him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; he inquired who he was and what he had done. 34 Some in the crowd shouted one thing, some another; and as he could not learn the facts because of the

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uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. 35 When Paul came to the steps, the violence of the mob was so great that he had to be carried by the soldiers. 36 The crowd that followed kept shouting, “Away with him!”

37 Just as Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, “May I say something to you?” The tribune replied, “Do you know **Greek**? 38 Then you are not the Egyptian who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?” 39 Paul replied, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of an important city; I beg you, **let me speak to the people.**” *Admirable attempt, responding to violence with words and diplomacy.* 40 When he had given him permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the people for silence; and when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the **Hebrew language**, *(most likely Aramaic)* saying:

Chapter 22

1 “Brothers and fathers, listen to the defense that I now make before you.” *This is Paul using his gift for meeting people where they are. He has the skills to reach across multiple cultures and worldviews.*

2 When they heard him addressing them in Hebrew, they became even more quiet. Then he said:

3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today. 4 I persecuted this Way up to the point of death by binding both men and women and putting them in prison, 5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. From them I also received letters to the brothers in Damascus, and I went there in order to bind those who were there and to bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment.

6 “While I was on my way and approaching Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ 8 I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Then he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.’ 9 Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. 10 I asked, ‘**What am I to do**, Lord?’ *The most important question to ask.* The Lord said to me, ‘Get up and go to Damascus; there you will be told everything that has been assigned to you to do.’ 11 Since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, those who were with me took my hand and led me to Damascus.

12 “A certain Ananias, who was a devout man according to the law and well spoken of by all the Jews living there, 13 came to me; and standing beside me, he said, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight!’ In that very hour I regained my sight and saw him. 14 Then he said, ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear his own voice; 15 for you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name.’

17 “After I had returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance 18 and **saw Jesus saying to me**, ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ 19 And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. 20 And while the blood of your witness Stephen was

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shed, I myself was standing by, approving and keeping the coats of those who killed him. ’ 21 Then he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles. ’”

22 Up to this point they listened to him, but then they shouted, “Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live.” 23 And while they were shouting, throwing off their cloaks, and tossing dust into the air, 24 the tribune directed that he was to be brought into the barracks, and ordered him to be examined by flogging, to find out the reason for this outcry against him. 25 But when they had tied him up with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who is uncondemned?” 26 When the centurion heard that, he went to the tribune and said to him, “What are you about to do? This man is a Roman citizen.” 27 The tribune came and asked Paul, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” And he said, “Yes.” 28 The tribune answered, “It cost me a large sum of money to get my citizenship.” Paul said, “But I was born a citizen.” 29 Immediately those who were about to examine him drew back from him; and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

30 Since he wanted to find out what Paul was being accused of by the Jews, the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and the entire council to meet. He brought Paul down and had him stand before them.

Chapter 23

1 While Paul was looking intently at the council he said, “Brothers, up to this day **I have lived my life with a clear conscience** before God.” *A powerful thing to be able to say. We should examine our lives regularly; the sacrament is an ideal time to do so.* 2 Then the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near him to strike him on the mouth. 3 At this Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting there to judge me according to the law, and yet in violation of the law you order me to be struck?” 4 Those standing nearby said, “Do you dare to insult God’s high priest?” 5 And Paul said, “I did not realize, brothers, that he was high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a leader of your people. ’”

6 When Paul noticed that some were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he called out in the council, “Brothers, **I am a Pharisee**, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead.” *Paul likely means that the resurrection of Jesus and therefore the saints is at the core of his gospel message. He is both building on common ground and setting his adversaries against each other.* 7 When he said this, a dissension began between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8 (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.) 9 Then a great clamor arose, and certain scribes of the Pharisees’ group stood up and contended, “We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” 10 When the dissension became violent, the tribune, fearing that they would tear Paul to pieces, ordered the soldiers to go down, take him by force, and bring him into the barracks.

11 That night the Lord stood near him and said, “**Keep up your courage!** For just as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also in Rome.” *Attitude and perspective usually does make a tremendous difference in how we approach our trials.*

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12 In the morning the Jews joined in a conspiracy and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. 13 There were more than forty who joined in this conspiracy. 14 They went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food until we have killed Paul. 15 Now then, you and the council must notify the tribune to bring him down to you, on the pretext that you want to make a more thorough examination of his case. And we are ready to do away with him before he arrives.”

16 Now the son of **Paul’s sister** (*I wish we knew more about her!*) heard about the ambush; so he went and gained entrance to the barracks and told Paul. 17 Paul called one of the centurions and said, “Take this young man to the tribune, for he has something to report to him.” 18 So he took him, brought him to the tribune, and said, “The prisoner Paul called me and asked me to bring this young man to you; he has something to tell you.” 19 The tribune took him by the hand, drew him aside privately, and asked, “What is it that you have to report to me?” 20 He answered, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more thoroughly into his case. 21 But do not be persuaded by them, for more than forty of their men are lying in ambush for him. They have bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink until they kill him. They are ready now and are waiting for your consent.” 22 So the tribune dismissed the young man, ordering him, “Tell no one that you have informed me of this.” *As I read this I was struck by the similarities between this account and the servant of Helaman protecting him from an assassination attempt by the Gadianton robbers.*

23 Then he summoned two of the centurions and said, “Get ready to leave by nine o’clock tonight for Caesarea with two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen. 24 Also provide mounts for Paul to ride, and take him safely to Felix the governor.” 25 He wrote a letter to this effect:

26 “Claudius Lysias to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings. 27 This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, but when I had learned that he was a Roman citizen, I came with the guard and rescued him. 28 Since I wanted to know the charge for which they accused him, I had him brought to their council. 29 I found that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but was charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. 30 When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him.”

31 So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him during the night to Antipatris. 32 The next day they let the horsemen go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. 33 When they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. 34 On reading the letter, he asked what province he belonged to, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia, 35 he said, “I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive.” Then he ordered that he be kept under guard in Herod’s headquarters.

Chapter 24

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1 Five days later the **high priest Ananias** came down with some elders and an attorney, a certain Tertullus, and they reported their case against Paul to the governor. 2 When Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying:

“Your Excellency, because of you we have long enjoyed peace, and reforms have been made for this people because of your foresight. 3 We welcome this in every way and everywhere with utmost gratitude. 4 But, to detain you no further, I beg you to hear us briefly with your customary graciousness. 5 We have, in fact, found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6 He even tried to profane the temple, and so we seized him. 8 By examining him yourself you will be able to learn from him concerning everything of which we accuse him.” [Again, power of stories, as well as the irony of a religious leader working against God’s chosen servant.](#)

9 The Jews also joined in the charge by asserting that all this was true.

10 When the governor motioned to him to speak, Paul replied:

“I **cheerfully make my defense**, knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation. 11 As you can find out, it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem. 12 They did not find me disputing with anyone in the temple or stirring up a crowd either in the synagogues or throughout the city. 13 Neither can they prove to you the charge that they now bring against me. 14 But this I admit to you, that according to the **Way**, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our ancestors, believing everything laid down according to the law or written in the prophets. 15 I have a hope in God—a hope that they themselves also accept—that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous. 16 Therefore I do my best always to have a clear conscience toward God and all people. 17 Now after some years I came to bring alms to my nation and to offer sacrifices. 18 While I was doing this, they found me in the temple, completing the rite of purification, without any crowd or disturbance. 19 But there were some Jews from Asia—they ought to be here before you to make an accusation, if they have anything against me. 20 Or let these men here tell what crime they had found when I stood before the council, 21 unless it was this one sentence that I called out while standing before them, ‘It is about the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.’” [Note how carefully Paul lays out the opposing perspectives on his message.](#)

22 But Felix, who was **rather well informed about the Way**, adjourned the hearing with the comment, “When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case.” 23 Then he ordered the centurion to keep him in custody, but to let him have some liberty and not to prevent any of his friends from taking care of his needs.

24 Some days later when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him speak concerning faith in Christ Jesus. 25 And as **he discussed justice, self-control, and the coming judgment**, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present; when I have an opportunity, I will send for you.” 26 At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul, and for that reason he used to send for him very often and converse with him. [\(amusing little side note\)](#)

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27 After **two years had passed**, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and since he wanted to grant the Jews a favor, Felix **left Paul in prison**. *Imagine the difficulties of these two years...*

Chapter 25

1 Three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem 2 where the chief priests and the leaders of the Jews gave him a report against Paul. They appealed to him 3 and requested, as a favor to them against Paul, to have him transferred to Jerusalem. They were, in fact, planning an ambush to kill him along the way. 4 Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea, and that he himself intended to go there shortly. 5 “So,” he said, “let those of you who have the authority come down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them accuse him.”

6 After he had stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea; the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. 7 When he arrived, the Jews who had gone down from Jerusalem surrounded him, **bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove**. 8 **Paul said in his defense**, “I have in no way committed an offense against the law of the Jews, or against the temple, or against the emperor.” 9 But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, asked Paul, “Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and be tried there before me on these charges?” 10 Paul said, “I am appealing to the emperor’s tribunal; this is where I should be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you very well know. 11 Now if I am in the wrong and have committed something for which I deserve to die, I am not trying to escape death; but if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can turn me over to them. I appeal to the emperor.” 12 Then Festus, after he had conferred with his council, replied, “You have appealed to the emperor; to the emperor you will go.”

13 After several days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to welcome Festus. 14 Since they were staying there several days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying, “There is a man here who was **left in prison** by Felix. 15 When I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me about him and asked for a sentence against him. 16 I told them that it was not the custom of the Romans to hand over anyone before the accused had met the accusers face to face and had been given an opportunity to make a defense against the charge. 17 So when they met here, I lost no time, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought. 18 When the accusers stood up, they did not charge him with any of the crimes that I was expecting. 19 Instead they had certain points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, but whom Paul asserted to be alive. 20 Since **I was at a loss** how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wished to go to Jerusalem and be tried there on these charges. 21 But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of his Imperial Majesty, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to the emperor.” 22 Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” he said, “you will hear him.”

23 So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice **came with great pomp**, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then Festus gave the order and Paul was brought in. 24 And Festus said, “King Agrippa and all here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish community petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting

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that he ought not to live any longer. 25 But I found that he had done nothing deserving death; and when he appealed to his Imperial Majesty, I decided to send him. 26 But I have nothing definite to write to our sovereign about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write— 27 for it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner without indicating the charges against him.”

Chapter 26

1 Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to **speak for yourself.**” Then Paul stretched out his hand and began to defend himself:

2 “I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, 3 because you are especially familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews; therefore I beg of you to listen to me patiently.

4 “All the Jews know my way of life from my youth, a life spent from the beginning among my own people and in Jerusalem. 5 They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I have belonged to the strictest sect of our religion and lived as a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand here on trial on account of my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors, 7 a promise that our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship day and night. It is for this hope, your Excellency, that I am accused by Jews! 8 Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

9 “Indeed, **I myself was convinced** that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And that is what I did in Jerusalem; with authority received from the chief priests, I not only locked up many of the saints in prison, but I also cast my vote against them when they were being condemned to death. 11 By punishing them often in all the synagogues I tried to force them to blaspheme; and since I was so furiously enraged at them, I pursued them even to foreign cities. **Paul is an exceptional example of being willing to change, even in radical ways.**

12 “With this in mind, I was traveling to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, 13 when at midday along the road, your Excellency, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my companions. 14 When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, **(I find deeply meaningful the teaching that God speaks to us according to our own language, worldview, even expectations)** ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? **It hurts you to kick against the goads.**’ **So worth reflection and discussion!** 15 I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ The Lord answered, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 But get up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and testify to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you. 17 **I will rescue you** from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18 to **open their eyes** so that they may **turn from darkness to light** and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

19 “After that, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout the countryside of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance. 21 For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. 22 **To this day I have had help from God,** and so I stand here, **testifying to both small and great,** saying nothing but what the

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prophets and Moses said would take place: 23 that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

24 While he was making this defense, Festus exclaimed, “You are out of your mind, Paul! **Too much learning is driving you insane!**” Also worth discussion ☺ Often it is a little learning that is dangerous, not too much. 25 But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth. 26 Indeed the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am certain that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.” 28 Agrippa said to Paul, “Are you so quickly persuading me to become a Christian?” 29 Paul replied, “Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that not only you but also all who are listening to me today might become such as I am—except for these chains.” (Both earnest and witty)

30 Then the king got up, and with him the governor and Bernice and those who had been seated with them; 31 and as they were leaving, they said to one another, “This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.” 32 Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to the emperor.” (Interesting. Paul fought for the opportunity to speak to the emperor, which fulfilled God’s promise he would testify in Rome. But if he hadn’t, he might have lived longer)

Chapter 27

1 When it was decided that we were to sail for Italy, they transferred Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort, named Julius. 2 Embarking on a ship of Adramyttium that was about to set sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, **we** put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. 3 The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul kindly, and allowed him to go to his friends to be cared for. 4 Putting out to sea from there, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. 5 After we had sailed across the sea that is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. 6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship bound for Italy and put us on board. 7 We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind was against us, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. 8 Sailing past it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

9 Since much time had been lost and sailing was now dangerous, because even the Fast (the Jewish Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, in August/September) had already gone by, **Paul advised them**, 10 saying, “Sirs, I can see that the voyage will be with danger and much heavy loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.” 11 But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. 12 Since the harbor was not suitable for spending the winter, the majority was in favor of putting to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, where they could spend the winter. It was a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest.

13 When a moderate south wind began to blow, they thought they could achieve their purpose; so they weighed anchor and began to sail past Crete, close to the shore. 14 But soon a violent wind, called the northeaster, rushed down from Crete. 15 Since the ship was caught and could not be turned head- on into the wind, we gave way to it and were driven. 16 By running under the lee of a small island called Cauda we were scarcely able to get the ship’s boat under control. 17 After hoisting it up they took measures to undergird the ship; then, fearing that they would run on the Syrtis, they

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lowered the sea anchor and so were driven. 18 We were being pounded by the storm so violently that on the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard, 19 and on the third day with their own hands they threw the ship’s tackle overboard. 20 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest raged, **all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.**

21 Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul then stood up among them and said, “Men, **you should have listened to me** and not have set sail from Crete and thereby avoided this damage and loss. 22 I urge you now to **keep up your courage**, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For last night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, 24 and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before the emperor; and indeed, God has granted safety to all those who are sailing with you.’ 25 So **keep up your courage**, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. 26 But we will have to run aground on some island.”

27 When the fourteenth night had come, as we were drifting across the sea of Adria, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. 28 So they took soundings and found twenty fathoms; a little farther on they took soundings again and found fifteen fathoms. 29 Fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. 30 But when the sailors tried to escape from the ship and had lowered the boat into the sea, on the pretext of putting out anchors from the bow, 31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat and set it adrift.

33 Just before daybreak, **Paul urged all of them to take some food**, saying, “Today is the fourteenth day that you have been in suspense and remaining without food, having eaten nothing. 34 Therefore I urge you to take some food, for it will help you survive; for none of you will lose a hair from your heads.” 35 After he had said this, **he took bread; and giving thanks to God in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat.** *Note the sacramental language! I love the idea that other moments in our lives, even in the midst of difficulty, can be sacramental and soul-sanctifying* 36 Then all of them were encouraged and took food for themselves. 37 (We were in all two hundred seventy- six persons in the ship.) 38 After they had satisfied their hunger, they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea.

39 In the morning they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned to run the ship ashore, if they could. 40 So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea. At the same time they loosened the ropes that tied the steering- oars; then hoisting the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. 41 But striking a reef, they ran the ship aground; the bow stuck and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the force of the waves. 42 The soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none might swim away and escape; 43 but the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, 44 and the rest to follow, some on planks and others on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

Chapter 28

1 After we had reached safety, we then learned that the island was called Malta. 2 The natives showed us unusual kindness. Since it had begun to rain and was cold, they kindled a fire and welcomed all of

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us around it. 3 Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and was putting it on the fire, when a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. 4 When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “This man must be a murderer; though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live.” 5 He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. 6 They were expecting him to swell up or drop dead, but after they had waited a long time and saw that nothing unusual had happened to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god.

7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. 8 It so happened that the father of Publius lay sick in bed with fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and cured him by praying and putting his hands on him. 9 After this happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. 10 They bestowed many honors on us, and when we were about to sail, they put on board all the provisions we needed.

11 Three months later we set sail on a ship that had wintered at the island, an Alexandrian ship with the Twin Brothers as its figurehead. 12 We put in at Syracuse and stayed there for three days; 13 then we weighed anchor and came to Rhegium. After one day there a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. 14 There we found believers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome. 15 The believers from there, when they heard of us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage.

16 When we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.

17 Three days later he called together the local leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, he said to them, “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. 18 When they had examined me, the Romans wanted to release me, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. 19 But when the Jews objected, **I was compelled to appeal to the emperor**—even though I had no charge to bring against my nation. 20 For this reason therefore I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is for the sake of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.” 21 They replied, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken anything evil about you. 22 But we would like to hear from you what you think, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

23 After they had set a day to meet with him, they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. 24 Some were convinced by what he had said, while others refused to believe. 25 So they disagreed with each other; and as they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah,

26 ‘Go to this people and say,
You will indeed listen, but never understand,
and you will indeed look, but never perceive.

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27 For this people’s heart has grown dull,
and their ears are hard of hearing,
and they have shut their eyes;
so that they might not look with their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and understand with their heart and turn—
and I would heal them. ’

28 Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”

30 He lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, 31 **proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance**

[Luke knew about Paul’s death, yet chose to end his account on this note.](#)

Additional Reading: N/A

Scripture Chain: [Acts 26:22–23](#); [Acts 28:30–31](#); [Romans 1:16](#); [D&C 18:10–16](#);
[D&C 33:7–11](#)

Acts 26:22-23 NRSV

To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place:23 that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles

Acts 28:30-31 NRSV

He lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance

Romans 1:16 NRSV

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek

D&C 18:10-16

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10 Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

11 For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

12 And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

13 And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!

14 Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people.

15 And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

16 And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!

D&C 33:7-11

7 Yea, verily, verily, I say unto you, that the field is white already to harvest; wherefore, thrust in your sickles, and reap with all your might, mind, and strength.

8 Open your mouths and they shall be filled, and you shall become even as Nephi of old, who journeyed from Jerusalem in the wilderness.

9 Yea, open your mouths and spare not, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your backs, for lo, I am with you.

10 Yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying: Repent, repent, and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;

11 Yea, repent and be baptized, every one of you, for a remission of your sins; yea, be baptized even by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.
