

Main Idea: By examining what happened to Paul in Acts 23:12-35, we’re reminded that living for Christ is a life and death matter. Paul’s story involves three scenes. We’ll investigate the story and then discuss four lessons the story teaches us about God.

- I. The danger (12-15)
  - A. The Jews took an oath to kill Paul (12-13).
  - B. The Jewish leaders joined the plot (14-15).
    1. Real Christianity is attractive.
    2. Real Christianity is also threatening.
- II. The discovery (16-22)
  - A. God used Paul’s nephew (16).
  - B. God used a centurion (17).
  - C. God used a commander (18-22).
- III. The deliverance (23-35)
  - A. God removed Paul from the danger.
    1. He worked through Roman soldiers (23-24).
    2. He worked through a letter (25-30).
    3. He worked through the legal process (31-35).
  - B. God doesn’t always do that.

An Opportunity to Learn: Four lessons about God...

1. God never promised us a life of ease.
2. God uses ordinary circumstances to accomplish His extraordinary plan.
3. God isn’t in a hurry.
4. God wants us to trust Him.

We are living in a world filled with people who would be thrilled if there were no followers of Jesus in it. That’s actually not saying it strongly enough. We are living in a world filled with people who hate the Jesus of the Bible and anyone associated with Him. This alarming news could unnerve those of us who are Jesus-followers, were it not for three realities. One, this is exactly what our Savior said would happen. Two, we used to be in that number and still would be apart from the grace of God. And three, it’s through this hostility that our Savior has purposed to reach the lost.

We’ll see this first reality in today’s Scripture reading, and the second and third realities in today’s sermon, which is the continuation of our series, “*The Gospel on Trial*,” in Acts 21-28.

*Scripture Reading: John 15:18-16:4*

Christianity is *a life and death matter*. Doing the will of God is a costly thing. It cost our Master His life. It may well cost us ours.

When the emperor Valens threatened Eusebuis with confiscation of all his goods, torture, banishment, or even death, the courageous Christian replied, "He needs not fear confiscation, who has nothing to lose; nor banishment, to whom heaven is his country; nor torments, when his body can be destroyed at one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty from sin and sorrow."<sup>2</sup>

We’re prone to leave out certain parts of the Christian message. It’s easy to preach, “Believe in Jesus and life will get better for you. You’ll be healthier and wealthier.” But of course, that’s not so. In a very real sense if you become a Christian, you become a wanted man or woman. You put a target on your back. You become the enemy of a

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Acts series preached at WBC in 2003.

<sup>2</sup> [William M. Batten, Fortune.](#)

world system in the hands of Satan himself who hates the Sovereign Lord and anything associated with Him.

Think about this. Vance Havner said that at the Nicene Council (an important church meeting in the fourth century AD), of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith.<sup>3</sup>

I can't substantiate Havner's illustration. But I do know this. Heaven will be filled with people who lost eyes and hands for Christ.

Please don't misunderstand me. Is it worth it to declare one's allegiance to Jesus? Yes! Indeed it will be worth it all when we see Him. But this is an age of suffering, of hostility, of rejection for the true child of God. As with Jesus, so for the follower of Jesus—first comes the cross, then the crown; first the suffering, then the glory.

Jesus talked a lot about cost-counting with His would-be-disciples. It's not because we earn our salvation, for we can't. To be saved we must admit we have nothing to offer to merit the favor of a holy God, but must accept the One He sent to save us, His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But to receive Jesus is to identify with the One the world crucified two thousand years ago. It ought not surprise us, then, that the world would resist and even hate us.

I've entitled today's message, "*What We Learn about God When We are Hated by the World.*" Acts 23:12-35 is a powerful reminder that living for Christ is a life and death matter. We're going to investigate Paul's story, which involves three scenes, and then discuss four lessons the story teaches us about God.

### I. Scene #1: The danger (12-15)

As the story begins Paul is being held in the fortress of Antonia. He had come to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey to deliver a benevolent offering to the needy there. But some angry Jews saw him in the temple, and slandered him, and a mob nearly tore him apart. The Roman tribune, Claudius Lysias, intervened and saved Paul's life.

The next day Paul appeared before the Jewish Sanhedrin, but was unable to clear his name. After another mob nearly tore him limb from limb, the commander took him back to the barracks. That night, according to verse 11, "The Lord stood by him and said, 'Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.'"

It's a sobering reality, if you think about it. From a human perspective it was going from bad to worse for Paul. But the Lord wasn't wringing His hands. Nor was Paul. Luke says, "The Lord stood by him." When the Lord stands by you, it makes all the difference in the world.

Here's a tip on how to study this Bible story, in fact, every Bible story. *Look for God.* Look for God in this story. He's at work, orchestrating His perfect plan for His servant, Paul, just like He is working in *our* lives, brothers and sisters.

But know this. Sometimes His plan for us includes *danger*. It certainly did for Paul. Notice two sources of peril that confronted the apostle.

**A. The Jews took an oath to kill Paul (12-13).** "When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.<sup>13</sup> There were more than forty who made this conspiracy."

So do the right thing, like collect an offering and bring it to help the poor, and everybody will appreciate you, right? Not right. Here are forty men who hated Paul so

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<sup>3</sup> Vance Havner.

much they took a vow to not take food or drink until they murdered the man they considered to be a menace to society. And they did it in the name of God and religion.

“Why would they want to kill Paul?” you ask. “What crime had he committed?”

There was no crime. Simply put, they hated him because they hated his message.

“What was his message?” you ask. He had the audacity to preach that all men, including Gentiles, could be saved by God’s grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That message infuriated them because it exposed some pretty ugly things inside of them.

Like their hatred of the Gentiles. And their love for rival gods, specifically, their traditions and national identity.

The vow they took was called a *cherem*. When a person took such a vow he was saying, “May God curse me if I fail to do this.”

Let the number sink in, my friends. It’s not one assassin after Paul, nor ten, nor twenty, but *forty*. Paul has forty terrorists who are willing to give their lives in order to eliminate him from the earth. And these are professed believers in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In fact, Paul himself was once just like them.

Listen to Paul’s testimony in 1 Timothy 1:12–13, “I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,<sup>13</sup> though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief.”

But the forty Jewish zealots weren’t alone in their scheme.

**B. The Jewish leaders joined the plot (14-15).** The *religious* leaders, that is. Luke records, “They went to the chief priests and elders and said, ‘We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul.<sup>15</sup> Now therefore you, along with the council, give notice to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case more exactly. And we are ready to kill him before he comes near.’”

It’s staggering to consider what people will do in the name of religion. Forty Jewish men (keep in mind they are probably devoted fathers, brothers, sons, patriots in their country) ask the chief priests (these are the men who are supposed to be the spiritual leaders in Israel) and the elders (men who are supposed to be mature and wise) to lie to the Roman commander (a violation of the Ten Commandments), so they can kill Paul (another obvious violation of the Ten Commandments).

And all of this is happening right inside or near the temple of God Himself, by men who are convinced they are pleasing God.

You ask, “Well, did the leaders agree to join this wicked plot?” Yes, they did, as we’ll see momentarily in verse 20.

Let’s stop for a moment, step back, and consider what we’re seeing here. This episode actually brings to light two features of genuine, biblical Christianity.

1. *Real Christianity is attractive.* It’s like a magnet that attracts the steely hearts of lost men and women. There’s something very compelling about a vibrant Christian. He or she attracts attention. Who sacrifices their own time and money in order to help people they don’t even know? Jesus-followers do, and people notice that. However...

2. *Real Christianity is also threatening.* When a real Christian enters a room, his very presence exposes the spiritual darkness of those outside of Christ. And when the Christian begins to share Christ, his message exposes the inadequacies of the non-Christian’s belief system. And once exposed, the non-Christian has a choice to make. He can either repent of his sinful thinking and living, or he can seek to remove the reminder of his need to repent.

The Jewish leaders chose the latter course with Paul. Paul had preached grace, but they clung to their system of works. Paul had insisted they were sinners who needed to be saved by Jesus, but they insisted they were good people who didn't need Jesus.

And so, instead of believing the message, they chose to eliminate the messenger.

It's frightening to see what hatred will do to a person. Hatred blinds us. Hatred produces irrational responses. Dear friend, if you are harboring hatred in your heart, beware! You are destroying yourself. I urge you to look to the One who has the power to transform hateful hearts.

So ends scene #1, the danger.

## II. Scene #2: The discovery (16-22)

In scene two, God brings the dangerous, deadly plot out into the light. He protects his servant Paul by using three human instruments.

**A. God used Paul's nephew (16).** "Now the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul."

So here we learn something new about Paul. He had a sister. Many scholars feel that when Paul became a Christian his family disowned and disinherited him, for he testifies in Philippians 3:8 that he "lost all things" for Christ's sake. We don't know if this sister's son was a believer or not, but apparently, he was at least sympathetic to his uncle. Also, he apparently had connections to high places. Perhaps he was in Jerusalem for rabbinic training as his Uncle Saul had been thirty years earlier. When he caught wind of the murderous plot, he went to see Paul and informed him.

**B. God used a centurion (17).** "Paul called one of the centurions and said, 'Take this young man to the tribune, for he has something to tell him.'"

The centurion, who had up to one hundred men under his charge, was the man directly responsible to guard Paul. So he's a powerful figure, but he doesn't call the ultimate shots. That authority belongs to the Roman tribune (whom the NIV calls "the commander").

As Paul assesses the situation, he doesn't like the odds. One hundred soldiers may be able to protect him from forty terrorists, but things will certainly get messy, and lives may be lost, and he doesn't want that to happen. So he urges the centurion to take his nephew to his boss, the tribune, the third human instrument used by God.

**C. God used a commander (18-22).** "So he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, 'Paul the prisoner called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, as he has something to say to you.'<sup>19</sup> The tribune took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, 'What is it that you have to tell me?'<sup>20</sup> And he said, 'The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more closely about him.'<sup>21</sup> But do not be persuaded by them, for more than forty of their men are lying in ambush for him, who have bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him. And now they are ready, waiting for your consent.'<sup>22</sup> So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, 'Tell no one that you have informed me of these things.'"

In studying narrative literature in the Bible, look for repetition. Notice how Luke here repeats the details of the plot. That's not filler in the text, but intentional. Luke could have said, "All this happened but the sovereign Lord saw it and intervened." But rather than saying it, Luke simply chooses to tell the story in such a way that we'll get the punchline.

And the punchline is this. God uses all kinds of instruments to accomplish His sovereign purposes. Here he used a nephew who overheard a conversation, a centurion

who was willing to listen, and a Roman commander who took the report seriously, to unveil the sinister plot against Paul.

In my life he used my dad's job search to move our family to a new town, and a new church, so that I could hear the gospel and be saved. Nothing just *happens* in life.

This is the beautiful doctrine called *providence*. "The providence of God," says John Piper in his recent book called *Providence*, "is his purposeful sovereignty by which he will be completely successful in the achievement of his ultimate goal for the universe. God's providence carries his plans into action, guides all things toward his ultimate goal, and leads to the final consummation."<sup>4</sup>

Notice the connection between providence and sovereignty. "God's sovereignty is his right and power to do all that he decides to do. In absolutely everything that needs to be done to bring about his purposes, God sees to it that it happens."<sup>5</sup>

Here's an example. On Christmas Eve 1875, Ira Sankey was traveling on a Delaware River steamboat when he was recognized by some of the passengers. His picture had been in the newspaper because he was the song leader for the famous evangelist D.L. Moody. They asked him to sing one of his own hymns, but Sankey demurred, saying that he preferred to sing William B. Bradbury's hymn, "Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us." As he sang, one of the stanzas began, "We are Thine; do Thou befriend us. Be the Guardian of our way."

When he finished, a man stepped from the shadows and asked, "Did you ever serve in the Union Army?"

"Yes," Mr. Sankey answered, "in the spring of 1860."

"Can you remember if you were doing picket duty on a bright, moonlit night in 1862?"

"Yes," Mr. Sankey answered, very much surprised.

"So did I, but I was serving in the Confederate army. When I saw you standing at your post, I thought to myself, 'That fellow will never get away alive.' I raised my musket and took aim. I was standing in the shadow, completely concealed, while the full light of the moon was falling upon you. At that instant, just as a moment ago, you raised your eyes to heaven and began to sing... 'Let him sing his song to the end,' I said to myself, 'I can shoot him afterwards. He's my victim at all events, and my bullet cannot miss him.' But the song you sang then was the song you sang just now. I heard the words perfectly: 'We are Thine; do Thou befriend us. Be the Guardian of our way.' Those words stirred up many memories. I began to think of my childhood and my God-fearing mother. She had many times sung that song to me. When you had finished your song, it was impossible for me to take aim again. I thought, 'The Lord who is able to save that man from certain death must surely be great and mighty.' And my arm of its own accord dropped limp at my side."<sup>6</sup>

I repeat, *nothing just happens in life*, not when there's a sovereign God on the throne.

### III. Scene #3: The deliverance (23-35)

The Bible teaches that our days are numbered by an all-knowing God (Job 14:5; Psalm 90:12; 139:16). Since Paul's number wasn't up, his life wasn't going to end no matter how many zealots took a vow. So...

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<sup>4</sup> <https://providencebook.org/>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> K. Hughes, [Liberating Ministry From The Success Syndrome](#), Tyndale, 1988, p. 69.

**A. God removed Paul from the danger.** Here's how. He used three human means to accomplish His sovereign end.

1. *He worked through Roman soldiers (23-24).* “Then he [the tribune] called two of the centurions and said, ‘Get ready two hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night.’<sup>24</sup> Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix the governor.”

Talk about fire-power! This Roman commander is taking no chances, is he? He doesn't want another riot on his resume! Let's do the math.<sup>7</sup>

200 foot soldiers

200 spearmen

70 horsemen

2 centurions

472 bodyguards!

I see two things here. One, I see a very cautious commander. And two, I see a very powerful God who is fulfilling His Word. Remember the Lord's promise to Paul? “You must testify in Rome.” And God is making sure that Paul will get there, in essence, saying through this massive military operation, “I'll take care of you, Paul. I will fulfill My plan for you. You can trust Me.”

Let this lesson sink in, beloved. Perhaps right now you're feeling alone and wondering if God has forgotten you. Be assured that He has not. He is at work. He knows what He is doing. You can trust Him. Though you can't see Him, He's working behind the scenes, orchestrating His good plan for you.

I like the application Swindoll draws from this, “If He [God] is able to stir up four hundred seventy-two earthly bodyguards to get Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea, safely and securely, He will have no trouble getting you from here to wherever, safely and securely.”<sup>8</sup>

2. *He worked through a letter (25-30).* “And he wrote a letter to this effect:<sup>26</sup> ‘Claudius Lysias<sup>9</sup>, to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings.’<sup>27</sup> This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen.<sup>28</sup> And desiring to know the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council.<sup>29</sup> I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment.<sup>30</sup> And when it was disclosed to me 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.”

It's interesting to notice the spin Mr. Lysias puts on the situation in this letter. What he says is true enough, but he tells Paul's story in a way that will reflect well on him. Notice the repetition of the first-person pronoun “I” throughout the letter.

I came. I rescued. I brought him. I found. I sent. Of course, what he *doesn't* say is, “I put a Roman citizen in chains and was seconds away from illegally flogging him.”

Lysias is not a Christian, but a self-protecting albeit honest civil servant. *Yet God used him.* This is how providence works. God can and does use even unregenerate people to accomplish His plan.

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<sup>7</sup> C. Swindoll, p. 255.

<sup>8</sup> C. Swindoll, p. 257.

<sup>9</sup> Luke finally tells us his name. Up to this point he has simply referred to him as “the tribune.”

They are not puppets. They are freely doing what they have chosen to do. But God superintends it all. As Proverbs 21:1 explains, “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.”

In Paul’s case, God worked through Roman soldiers, then through a letter.

3. *He worked through the legal process (31-35).* “So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.<sup>10</sup> And on the next day they returned to the barracks, letting the horsemen go on with him. When they had come to Caesarea<sup>11</sup> and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. On reading the letter, he asked what province he was from. And when he learned that he was from Cilicia, he said, ‘I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive.’ And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod’s praetorium.”

Interesting. We’re told that Governor Felix asks what province Paul is from. Why that question? Because he has legal process in mind. The region of Cilicia, where Paul’s home town of Tarsus was located, was part of the territory under the jurisdiction of Felix. Hence his response, “I will give you a hearing.” If Paul had been from another region, Felix would have deferred the case.

Why do we need to know that? What is Luke trying to show us? Something very important. The God we serve controls not only people, but legal processes too, no matter how wicked the person behind the bench may be.

This Felix was quite a character with a remarkable story. He started life as a slave. His brother, Pallas, was the favorite of Nero. Through the influence of Pallas, Felix made the remarkable move from being a slave to a freedman and then to being a governor. Tacitus, the Roman historian, said of him, “He exercised the prerogatives of a king with the spirit of a slave.”

He was no saint, for sure. He married three princesses, one right after the other—the second was a granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra; the third was Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I who left her husband to marry Felix. This man was known to hire thugs to murder his own closest supporters.<sup>12</sup>

And this man is the judge before whom Paul will stand.

In his book, *Providence*, John Piper entitles chapter 25, “We Are Immortal till Our Work Is Done.” Here is his explanation of the title:

The truth of God’s providence has been the stabilizing power for thousands of Christ’s emissaries. Believing that God holds life and death and always works mercy for his children has freed them to embrace the dangers of the mission and has sustained them when death came.

Henry Martyn, missionary to India and Persia, who died when he was thirty-one (on October 16, 1812), wrote in his journal in January 1812:

To all appearance, the present year will be more perilous than any I have seen; but if I live to complete the Persian New Testament, my life after that will be of less importance. But whether life or death be mine, may Christ be magnified in me! If he has work for me to do, I cannot die.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Antipatris was a Roman military post and rest stop for travelers heading from Jerusalem to Caesarea. This leg of the trip was about 35 miles, and the fact that the soldiers made it in one night indicates a double-time march.

<sup>11</sup> This leg of the trip was 28 miles.

<sup>12</sup> Barclay, pp. 167-8.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Martyn, *Journal and Letters of Henry Martyn* (New York: Protestant and Episcopal for the Promotion of Evangelical Knowledge, 1851), 460.

This has often been paraphrased as “I am immortal till Christ’s work for me to do is done.” This is profoundly true. And it rests squarely on Martyn’s confidence that life and death are in the hands of a sovereign God. Indeed, the entire cause of Christ is in his hand. Seven years earlier, at twenty-four, Martyn had written:

What a world this would be, if there were no God! Were God not the sovereign of the universe, how miserable I should be! But the Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad. And Christ’s cause shall prevail. O my soul, be happy in the prospect.<sup>14</sup>

My friend, because God is truly in control, we can face the uncertainties of life with great assurance. We do not know what’s coming, but *He does*.

This is the ballast that stabilizes the ship in the storm.

When God saved Paul two decades earlier, He made it clear, “This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings (Acts 9:15).” God meant what He said, and what He promised He is now fulfilling. When Paul was a freeman, he didn’t testify before kings. But now, as a *prisoner*, he is. In Acts 24 he will testify before Governor Felix, in Acts 25 before Governor Festus, in Acts 26 before King Agrippa, and in Acts 28 he will be in Rome, speaking to the highest dignitaries of the then known world.

I don’t know what God has in store for you and for me in the days to come, but this I know. He has a plan for us, a plan that involves some suffering, yes, as it did for His Son, but it’s also a plan that will result in our eternal joy and His eternal glory.

And the next time we find ourselves struggling with doubts about His plan, let’s remember how He worked in Acts 23, and how Paul left town with an escort fit for a king, and how he left behind forty hungry men.

But there’s something else we need to remember.

**B. God doesn’t always do that.** Sometimes He takes us *out of* danger. Sometimes though, He leaves us *in* it. We’re not alone, for He’s with us, but we’re still *in* the danger, nonetheless. On this occasion God used the Romans to deliver Paul. Ten years later He allowed the Romans to behead Paul, and thus transport Paul to his eternal reward. For as Paul himself will write from his prison in a couple of years or so, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21).”

#### An Opportunity to Learn: Four lessons about God...

1. *God never promised us a life of ease.* Paul faced danger soon after he became a Christian, and it never let up until the day God took him home to glory. From the day Paul left Damascus in a basket under the cover of darkness (Acts 9:22ff.), until this day, it wasn’t easy for Paul. But God never said it would be. Nor for us.

2. *God uses ordinary circumstances to accomplish His extraordinary plan.* Yes, God can do the miraculous, and sometimes He does. But what He delights to do, and what He typically does, is work through the *little things*.

Augustine once said, “Trust the past to the mercy of God, the present to His love, and the future to His providence.”

Somerset Maugham, the English writer, once wrote a story about a janitor at St. Peter's Church in London. One day a young vicar discovered that the janitor was illiterate and fired him. Jobless, the man invested his meager savings in a tiny tobacco shop, where he prospered, bought another, expanded, and ended up with a chain of tobacco stores worth several hundred thousand dollars. One day the man's banker said, "You've done

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<sup>14</sup> John Piper, *Providence*, pp. 376-7.



well for an illiterate, but where would you be if you could read and write?" "Well," replied the man, "I'd be janitor of St. Peter's Church in Neville Square."<sup>15</sup>

3. *God isn't in a hurry.* From the human perspective, Claudius Lysius was just doing his job. In reality He was doing *God's* job.

This causes me to think of another Roman soldier. From the human perspective the centurion who authorized his men to crucify Jesus was just doing his job. Little did he know, he was working for God. According to the divine plan he was nailing to the cross the Chosen One who had come to die for the sins of hell-bound sinners, including you and me.

God did not deliver His Son that day, choosing to judge Him in our place. And then, on day three, He delivered His Son, raising Him from the dead, who weeks later returned to heaven where He took His seat at the right hand of God.

This is our God. He has a plan, and He's not in a hurry.

4. *God wants us to trust Him.* Don't turn *from* Him. Turn *to* Him. Trust Him now.

*When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,  
What a glory He sheds on our way!  
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,  
And with all who will trust and obey.*

*Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,  
But His smile quickly drives it away;  
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,  
Can abide while we trust and obey.*

*Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet.  
Or we'll walk by His side in the way.  
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;  
Never fear, only trust and obey.*

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

### **Closing Song: #349 "Trust and Obey" (all five verses)**

#### Community Group Discussion:

1. This morning's message was entitled, "*What We Learn about God When We are Hated by the World.*" We examined carefully the dangerous situation Paul faced in Acts 23:12-35. Take time to read again the account. What emotions do you feel when you hear this passage?
2. In verses 12-15, we're introduced to a group of more than forty men who made a vow to kill Paul. Why did they hate Paul so much? What effect did their hatred have on themselves? By way of application, what happens when we hate people?
3. In verse 16, Paul learned about the hateful plot. How did he respond? Have you ever been hated by someone? How does the knowledge of being hated affect us?
4. In verses 23-35, we're told how Claudius Lysias handled this volatile situation. What did he do, and what's your assessment of him?
5. What do we learn about God from this story? About ourselves? About the nature of our mission as a church?

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<sup>15</sup> *Bits and Pieces*, June 24, 1993, p. 23.