

This week's study is provided by IHOPer Bob Gearhart. The following study materials are his questions he wrote and then led at last Tuesday's IHOP Bible Study session (6/21/05).

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

18 Acts 22: 30 to 23:22, "Paul before the Sanhedrin" – study page

Acts 22:30 to 23: 11, "Before the Sanhedrin;" Acts 23: 12 – 22, "The Plot to kill Paul."

The purpose of the Book of Acts is to record the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Vision and Ministry of Peter and Paul. **Today's study is the 18th of 20 lessons.**

A contextual statement:

Interestingly, *The Interpreter's Bible* makes the following observation. In the book of Acts, "The Lord is not returned, but in the meantime the word of God is being carried on by the church. The Gentile mission is itself the eschatological action of God." (*The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1971. p. 730.)

This I want to affirm as our perspective. **We will study this book from the perspective of the in-breaking of the Holy Spirit.** This puts us on the cusp of a deep and foreboding spiritual hole that is eternally deep. The Holy Spirit is that intuited presence within us that urges us to "Jump." "Jump!" To take this leap of faith means to surrender ourselves to the eternal deeps. The discovery, to which I can personally testify, is that this deep, dark, mysterious hole is the place where God lives within us. As we lose control of everything—our-selves, our relationships to neighbor and to God—then we can discover that God really does sustain us. But the experience is like falling, and it is not entirely comfortable. But it works.

According to our Study Chart we are studying "Paul's Ministry while in Jerusalem" (121:17 to 26: 32). We will review this section in three studies. This is the second of three lessons.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON (Bob's material begins here.)

The tribune, Claudius Lysias, releases Paul in order to bring him before the chief priests and the council in order to determine the accusation against him. Chapter 23:1-22 provides us with Luke's version of the trial, if it can be really referred to as such.

As was customary, Paul opens with a speech in his own defense only to be rebuked by Ananias. Paul loses his temper at this point, but claims he did not recognize Ananias as the high priest.

The narrative continues with a description of Paul claiming his position as a Pharisee. This invokes violent dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees since the Sadducees do not believe in life after death while the Pharisees do. Paul's claim of the resurrection of Jesus sets off this near riot that could have resulted in Paul's injury or death. He was subsequently taken into the barracks.

That night the Lord stood near Paul and encouraged him to keep his courage.

The remaining verses tell us of a conspiracy of a few (40) men to kill Paul and, his nephew's warning, and the tribunal's preparations to take Paul Caesarea.

Our discussion will focus not only on the historical events, but on how similar situations can and do impact our own faith and effect current situations both positively and negatively.

READ THE ASSIGNMENT IN ONE READING

1. Acts 22:30 to 23: 5

a. Why did Paul start with a speech?

WS: Paul was defending himself before the Sanhedrin.

b. What is your take on the exchange between Paul and the high priest?

WS: Overall, the High Priest was upset over the general trend of Paul's reputation as presenting a new covenant. However, in particular, Paul had spoken the word "God" which in the Jewish tradition could never be spoken. The use of any word by an individual meant that the owner of these words owned them. Consequently, to own the word "G-O-D" would be idolatry. This is the reason the High Priest commanded that Paul be struck "on the mouth."

c. Why would Paul not of known who he was?

WS: Periodically, the High Priest role was rotated from person to person. Paul had been gone for some time (two years?) and did not recognize that he was speaking to the High Priest. It is interesting to note the detail Luke provides at this time in his work in Acts. Also, it is interesting to note the quick thinking of Paul to the situation of offending the High Priest. Paul quotes Exodus 22:28, as his apology.

d. What resulted from this exchange?

WS: The result of the exchange between the High Priest and Paul, is that now both are on equal ground. There is no one-up-manship.

e. What does it take to provoke you to anger, as Paul was by the high priest?

WS: To answer this question, I shared the proposal of Soren Kierkegaard, from his book Sickness Unto Death that there are three responses people make because of their personalities. Kierkegaard reported the following illustration: There are three responses, each with two manifestations. These are "Naïve I and II," "Circumspect I and II," "Defiance I and II."

K's illustration is the following: You tell a Naïve responsive person, "You have a fly on your nose," and they will faint. You tell a Circumspect responsive person, "You have a fly on your nose," and they will respond, "Well, I declare. I understand this is a terrible situation, but I try to live with it as best as I can." You tell a Defiant responsive person, "You have a fly on your nose," and they will respond, "Listen Buster! You tell me that again and I'll smash your nose."

Kierkegaard then raises the question, "Which of these is closer to salvation?" His answer is "The Defiant person." His reasoning is as follows: The Naïve responsive person is in denial. The Circumspect responsive person will not take a clear stand depending on which way the wind is blowing. The Defiant responsive person is living with hopelessness, and when hope is clearly offered, will move toward the solution.

The question raised was, "What kind of responsive person are you?" I'm a circumspect man!

2. Acts 23: 6

a. Discuss Paul's claim as a Pharisee. Read Philippians 3:1-11

WS: This is not a clearer, more persuasive illustration in the New Testament. If Paul can live through such pain on behalf of Christ, then there is no excuse for us as modern disciples not to.

b. Why would Paul claim to be a Pharisee at this "trial?"

WS: Paul's claim to be a better Pharisee than any of them was the truth. Again, we see, in great detail provided by Luke, Paul's quick mind and his ability to think on his feet.

c. Does this seem consistent with Paul's normal demeanor?

WS: Yes, Paul is a wily character.

3. Acts 23: 7-10

a. Discuss the behavior of the court.

WS: The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection nor in angels. This is why they were SAD - YOU - SEE! The Pharisees did believe in these things. The result is a theological warfare. However, note that both of these positions are Head Trip Analysis!

b. Does this sort of behavior exist today?

WS: Yes, of course. Head Trip arguments are the central issue of our time. The solution is Gut Trip Analysis!

4. Acts 23: 11

a. Has there been a time in your life when you felt the Holy Spirit encouraging you to continue on your faith journey?

WS: My personal testimony is that I am compelled to publish and to preach. The urgency grows as I grow older now and can begin to see the time of mental decline approaching closer and closer. As of yet, my intellectual capacity is at a very high moment, for which I'm very grateful.

5. Acts 23: 12-15

a. How can a small group of angry dissenters stir up a large crowd?

WS: The IHOPers discussed this using several illustrations of how small groups of dedicated people can change the direction of history. Terrorists, communists and others like them were examined.

b. How does this parallel possible contemporary behavior in both our secular and religious community?

WS: The IHOPers used the current debate in Kansas over evolution and intelligent design. I reminded the group that religion is not a search for THE TRUTH, but a search for THE GOODNESS. The main question is, "Is it the right thing to do?"

6. Acts 23: 16-22

a. What can happen when one honest, forthright person takes a step in the right direction and other less adventuresome people are willing to follow?

WS: In this instance, it is Paul's nephew who provides the courageous act. He takes it upon his self to respond to what he heard to Paul in prison. Again, Luke provides elegant detail in the response of the Centurion who takes the nephew "by the hand, drew him aside and asked, 'What is it you want to tell me?'" I explores with the IHOPers the idea of BEING ON DEATH GROUND." My illustration is as a youth at church camp during the 1940's when only powdered milk was available to drink. A couple of friends and I spotted a cow in a nearby pasture. The next morning we borrowed a bucket and walked to the fence. None of us were country boys and knew how to milk. However, I volunteers to try, climbed through the fence and walked about 30 yards in the field. The "cow-now-a-bull" turned to charge and I was on death ground. I dropped the pail, ran and literally dove through the fence.

Being on death ground is necessary if history is to be turned in a new direction. The chief captain, but himself on death ground in order to protect a Roman Citizen.

Another current illustration explored was that of the recent exposure of "Death Throat," the No. 2 FBI man exposing Richard Nixon's order of Watergate.

b. Why, do you suppose, was the chief captain so anxious to get Paul safely out of town?

WS: Just how large a contingent was order may be under question. However, this was necessary in order to get Paul out of town safely. Paul was a Roman citizen protected until a Roman "bill of rights." Also, God's presence in vs. 23: 11, indicated that Paul's mission was not yet completed until he arrived in Rome.

Alright folks, talk to me!