

The Parish of Wellow

'Be Daring and Dynamic' 24 Studies in Acts Acts 23:10-24 'Just when I need him the most' Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below or join us at **Coffee 'n' Stickies** Wednesday 22nd November 7.30pm at 51 Under Knoll, PSJ (Call Jennifer Cole 01761 437768 for directions)

1. Talk Passage - Acts 23:10-24

10 The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.

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

12 The next morning the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

13 More than forty men were involved in this plot.

14 They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul.

15 Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here."

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

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him."

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

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

20 He said: "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him.

21 Don't give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request."

22 The commander dismissed the young man and cautioned him, "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me."

23 Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, "Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight.

24 Provide mounts for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix."

2. Talk Notes

- 2.1 Paul views his adverse situation in prison as a opportunity to spread the gospel:
- v. Being in prison gives him an opportunity to write - with the result that we have the '*prison epistles*' - letters written from Paul to a number of the churches he helped to set up
 - vi. He views himself not as a prisoner of the state but as a prisoner for the cause of Christ '*I am prisoner for the Lord*' (Ephesians 4:1)
 - vii. He considers himself an ambassador for Christ to his fellow prisoners: '*I am an ambassador in chains*' (Ephesians 6:20)
 - viii. Prison gives Paul a chance to spread the gospel to people and places that Christians would not otherwise have had access to: *Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.* (Philippians 1:12-13).

2.2 As Paul spends his first night in prison three important things happen for him

- iv. His best friend comes and stands by him
- v. His best friend comes and speaks to him
- vi. His best friend executes a plan to protect him

2.3 Jesus stands by him '*the Lord stood near Paul*' (23:11)

- iii. Jesus sympathises with Paul because he know exactly what Paul is going through.
- iv. Jesus sustains Paul reminding him that "*His grace is sufficient for him, for His power is made perfect in weakness.*" (2 Corinthians 12:9)

2.4 Jesus speaks to him '*and said*' (23:11)

- v. What a blessing to have a God who speaks to us.
- vi. Jesus encourages Paul (v11) '*take courage*'
- vii. Jesus congratulates Paul for defending him and witnessing to him in Jerusalem.
- viii. Jesus promises that he will be going to Rome.

2.5 Jesus executes a plan to protect him (23:12-24)

- iii. God wants Paul to go to Rome and he thwarts the plan to have Paul executed with the help of a little boy.
- iv. God delights in dealing with impossible situations. Our weakness is his strength.

3. Coffee 'n' Stickies Questions

3.1 Why are the Jews so against Paul? Can we see any similarities to the reaction of the Jews to Paul in ourselves, in our church, in our country or in our world today?

3.2 How does God speak to us? How can we be sure that it is God speaking?

3.3 What can we learn about witnessing from this passage?

3.4 What can we learn from Paul in terms of dealing with adverse situations?

3.5 In a conversation the other day a friend of yours says that her church has started regularly visiting her local prison which she thinks is a total waste of time. How would you respond?

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Matthew Street 19th November 2006

The Benefice of Deasedown St John with Wellow

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