



the upside down series
week nineteen: upside down opportunity

1. _____ a good conscience gives you _____ opportunities.
2. _____ your sphere of influence gives you unexpected opportunities.
3. _____ in your life reinforces unexpected opportunities.
4. Accepting _____ gives you unexpected opportunities.
5. Sacrificing _____ gives you unexpected opportunities.

I always like to regroup and bring you up to speed at the beginning of the week. Paul had made it to Jerusalem despite the warnings of many. True to form, he gets arrested for sharing the gospel. But Paul doesn't see it as a disaster. He sees it as an opportunity. He now has the ears of all as he shares his testimony of what God has done for him. We pick up the story with Paul before the council and another chance to preach!



day one: Jesus is far more

Our chapter this week is relatively short so I've divided it up into small portions to meditate on each day.

Start by reading Acts 23:1-5.

exploring the text

1. Let's review: what is the source of the conflict? Look back at Acts 22 for a reminder.
2. How had Paul received some protection towards the end of Acts 22?
3. What is Paul's attitude in vs.1?

4. Why was Paul struck for saying that he has fulfilled his duty to God in all good conscience? What was he claiming about himself?

interesting fact

5. What did Paul call the high priest in vs.3?

It has been said that “the best of men are but men at best. Don’t try to find perfection in Peter or Paul, or you will be disappointed. We see how far even the excellency of Paul comes short of the behavior of Jesus, who when He was reviled, reviled not again.

6. Why did Paul apologize in vs.5?

personal application

7. Read Romans 14:13. What reason may Paul had had for humbling himself by apologizing?



day two: personal treatment

Don't forget to begin your time with prayer. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot understand the things of the Lord.

Read Acts 23:6-11.

exploring the text

1. What issue does Paul bring up to confuse the crowd in vs.6?
2. What caused the split in the assembly in vs. 8-9?
3. What happened to Paul as a result of the scheme?
4. What does the Lord promise Paul in vs. 11?

interesting fact

The issue of the resurrection was perhaps the biggest theological hot potato between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; the Sadducees accepted only the Pentateuch, which does not overtly teach the doctrine of the resurrection.



day three: foiled plans

Paul has received a personal word of encouragement from the Lord that all will be well. Let's see what happens today.

Read Acts 23:12-22.

exploring the text

1. How bitter were the Jewish people towards Paul as seen in vs. 12?
2. How many Jews entered into the plot to kill Paul?
3. Who foiled the plot and how?
4. What did the captain do about the matter?

verse

I Corinthians
15:58

Therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.



day four: God at work

We are going to finish the chapter today. I hope you were inspired by the story of Paul's nephew! I love nephews! God has used them to encourage me in my life more than you (or they) will ever know!

Read Acts 23:23-35.

exploring the text

1. Describe how the tribune planned to move Paul.
2. Why do you think the tribune had such favor on Paul?
3. What do you learn about Claudius Lysias in today's passage?

4. To whom was the case of Paul referred to?

interesting fact

Herod's Paetorium
- Felix's official
residence in
Caesarea, a
beautiful city
on the
Mediterranean,
about 30 minutes
south of Haifa -
where my mother
was born, and only
a couple of hours
south of Beirut -
where I was born.

5. Why didn't the captain handle the case himself?

6. How does Claudius Lysias present a picture of our own human nature? Does he have any sense of God's hand? How many times is the word "I" used in vs. 26-31?

personal application

7. In what ways do you need to grow in humbly acknowledging God's hand in your life?



day five: Paul's sufferings

You gotta wonder how Paul endured all the times he spent in prison. How did he remain joyful? How was he able to keep on trusting the Lord?

Let's Read II Corinthians 11:16-33.

exploring the text

1. Summarize Paul's persecutions.

verse

Philippians 2:14-15

Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

2. In vs. 28, Paul mentions the pressure from the churches right there in the middle of his talking about floggings. Does that surprise you?
3. Did Paul feel weak in the midst of all the difficulties?

