

The Church of the Holy Apostles;  
A Bible Study on the Book of Acts  
Based upon the Homilies of St John Chrysostom (SJC)  
Study Guide – April 6, 2016, Acts 23.6-30 - Homily 49

**Prayer before reading of the Holy Scriptures:** Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments so that, having conquered sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things which are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the light of our souls and bodies, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all holy, good and life giving Spirit, always now and forever and to the ages of ages.

**Chapter 23 v. 6-11** *But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection -- and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks. But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."*

Paul discourses as a man, not always depending upon supernatural help. He divides the crowd, but speaks only the truth. Since the crowd refuses to accuse him, he states the charges himself.

The Pharisees defend Paul to fight against the Sadducees. SJC *"Why did they not please for him before this? Do you observe, how, when the passions give way, the truth is discovered?"*

Be a Roman citizens saves Paul from the crowd. SJC *"Sufficient for proof of his innocence was even this, that the man was saved when at the point to be pulled in pieces."*

Even after God promises Paul will be safe, Paul suffers, but never gives up hope. Paul continues to use human means. SJC *"But why did He not appear to him before he fell into the danger? Because it is evermore in the afflictions that God comforts us; for He appears more wished-for, while even in the dangers He exercises and trains us."*

**Chapter 23 v. 12-22** *And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. "Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near." So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him." So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you." Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?" And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. "But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you." So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded him, "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me."*

Jews were filled with rage, hatred and malice. SJC *"Why then those men are accused forever, seeing they did not kill Paul. And forty together. For such is the nature of that nation: when there needs concerting together for a good object, not even two concur with each other: but when it is for an evil object, the entire people does it."*

Oaths are a great curse. SJC *"Just as Herod imposed on himself that necessity by his oath, so also do these. For such are the devil's (ways): under the pretext forsooth of piety he sets his traps. And they came to the chief priests, etc. And yet they ought to have come (to the tribune), ought to have laid a charge, and assembled a court of justice: for these are not the doings for priests, but for captains of banditti, these are not the doings for rulers, but for ruffians. They endeavor also to corrupt the ruler: but it was providentially ordered, to the intent that he also should learn of their plot. For not (only) by their having nothing to say, but also by their secret attempt, they convicted themselves that they were naught."*

It is providence that Paul's nephew overheard the plot, so he could warn Paul.

Paul is saved again by man's forethought. Everything is kept a total secret until the exact moment, to avoid any leaks.

**Chapter 23 v. 23-30** *And he called for two centurions, saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; "and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor." He wrote a letter in the following manner: Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings. This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains. And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him. Farewell.*

No excuses left for the Jews. SJC *"Paul is sent into Caesarea, that there too he might discourse in a greater theatre and before a more splendid audience: that so the Jews may not be able to say, If we had seen Paul, we would have believed— if we had heard him teaching. Therefore this excuse too is cut off from them."*

Outsiders are the ones who defend Paul, first the Pharisees (v.9) and now Claudius even becomes Paul's minister delivering him to Felix. Claudius accuses the Jews, not Paul.

**Teaching on "The things which hurt us, save us."** – (see Homily 49) SEE Genesis 37-47

**1. Joseph was put in prison as protection**

*Such are God's ways of ordering: the very things by which we are hurt, by these same are we benefited. Thus it was with Joseph: his mistress sought to ruin him: and she seemed indeed to be contriving his ruin, but by her contriving she placed him in a state of safety: for the house where that wild beast (of a woman) was kept was a den in comparison with which the prison was gentle.... She made his master his foe, but she made God his friend: brought him into closer relation to Him Who is indeed the true Master.*

**2. Joseph was sold into slavery as protection**

*Again, his brethren sold him; but they freed him from having enemies dwelling in the same house with him, from envy and much ill will, and from daily machinations for his ruin: they placed him far aloof from them that hated him... When he was in honor, then was he in danger; when he was in dishonor, then was he in safety.*

**3. Esau drove Jacob into a foreign land, but he prospered**

*This (Joseph's) uncle (Esau) had ill designs against his father (Jacob), and drove him out of his native land: what then? He too set him (thereby) aloof from the danger; for he too got (thereby) to be in safety... Thus, in every point of these men's history, the more people designed their hurt, the more their affairs flourished.*

**Life Application Challenge – (Homily 49) Seek love and partnership in marriage**

*Nothing whatever, is more precious than to be thus loved by a wife and to love her.... So that it is not for her wealth that we ought to seek a wife: it is that we may receive a partner of our life, for the appointed order of the procreation of children. It was not that she should bring money, that God gave the woman; it was that she might be an helpmate.... seek a beautiful soul, that we may also succeed in obtaining love. This is the exceeding wealth, this the great treasure, this the endless good things: whereunto may we all attain by the grace and loving kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom to the Father and the Holy Ghost together be glory, dominion, honor, now and ever, world without end. Amen.*