

Devoted and Unshaken: The Book of Acts
“How To Trust In God’s Purpose In A Crisis” (#27) Acts 23
Cornerstone Church of Poway
Pastor Ed Turley
October 26th, 2025

Sermon Notes

Big Idea: God is present and faithful, even when circumstances seem uncertain.

How To Trust In God’s Purpose In A Crisis

1. When People Turn Against You – Trust God Is Still Working For You (vv. 1–11)

¹ Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day." ² At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!" ⁴ Those who were standing near Paul said, "You dare to insult God's high priest?" ⁵ Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'" **Acts 23:1-5 (NIV)**

⁶ Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead." ⁷ When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸ (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.) ⁹ There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. "We find nothing wrong with this man," they said. "What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" 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." **Acts 23:6-11 (NIV)**

"Cease *striving* and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." **Psalms 46:10 (NASB)**

2. When the Enemy Plots Against You — Trust God’s Protection Surrounds You (vv. 12–22)

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."

Acts 23:12-22 (NIV)

There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed **against** the LORD.

Proverbs 21:30 (NIV)

3. When Life Takes Unexpected Turns — Trust God's Purpose Will Advance You (vv. 23–35)

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." ²⁵ He wrote a letter as follows: ²⁶ Claudius Lysias, To His Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings. ²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen. ²⁸ I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin. ²⁹ I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment. ³⁰ When I was informed of a plot to be carried out against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also ordered his accusers to present to you their case against him. ³¹ So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris. ³² The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. ³³ When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. ³⁴ The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, ³⁵ he said, "I will hear your case when your accusers get here." Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod's palace. **Acts 23:23-35 (NIV)**

Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to **advance the gospel**. ¹³ As a result, it has become clear throughout the **whole palace guard** and to everyone else that I am in chains **for Christ**. ¹⁴ Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been **encouraged to speak** the word of God more **courageously and fearlessly**.

Philippians 1:12-14 (NIV)

➤ **"Where do you need to trust God's purpose today?"**

Notes: _____

My Next Right Steps, I Will:

- ☐ Trust God's purpose prevails through crisis
- ☐ Accept Jesus as My Savior and Lord
- ☐ Be baptized as a believer in Jesus Christ



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Talk It Over

Welcome & Prayer: Invite God's Spirit to guide the discussion.

Big Idea: God is present and faithful, even when circumstances seem uncertain.

Icebreaker — "Plot Twist!"

Share a time when life threw you a curveball that, in hindsight, worked out for your good. How did that experience grow your faith or change your perspective?
(Keep it light but honest—this builds connection and opens the heart.)

Invite three volunteers to read: Acts 23:1–35

- Verses 1–11 (Opposition and encouragement)
- Verses 12–22 (The assassination plot)
- Verses 23–35 (Paul's transfer and protection)

How To Trust In God's Purpose In A Crisis

1. When People Turn Against You – Trust God Is Still Working For You (1–11)

How does Paul demonstrate courage and integrity under pressure?

What does Jesus' appearance in verse 11 reveal about God's care for us?

How can we find peace when we're misunderstood or falsely accused?

Read: Romans 8:31, Psalm 46:10

Reflection Question: Where do I need to trust God more rather than people's approval?

2. When the Enemy Plots Against You — Trust God's Protection Surrounds You (vv. 12–22)

What does this passage teach about God's unseen protection?

How does Paul's nephew's role show that God uses ordinary people?

What "coincidences" have you seen lately that might be God's hand at work?

Read: Proverbs 21:30, Psalm 91:1

Reflection Question: Where might God already be working behind the scenes in your crisis?

3. When Life Takes an Unexpected Turn — Trust God's Purpose Will Advance You (vv. 23–35)

How is it significant that Roman soldiers end up protecting Paul?

What does this tell you about God's ability to use anyone or anything for His plan?

How does Paul's journey encourage you to trust when life feels rerouted?

Philippians 1:12, Romans 8:28

Reflection Question: How could God be using your current struggle to move His purpose forward?

Going Deeper

Paul's calling wasn't cancelled by crisis—it was confirmed by it.

- ✓ How might God be using your current difficulty to confirm your calling?
- ✓ What would trusting His purpose look like this week—practically?

Prayer Focus

Pray over one another's current "crisis zones."

Pray for peace when opposed, courage when afraid, and eyes to see God's hand at work.

Action Step

This week, whenever fear or stress arises, say aloud:

"God's purpose is never off course."

Text this reminder to a group member midweek for encouragement.