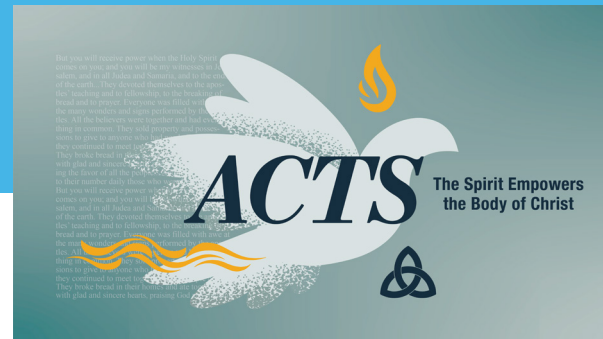


# Discussion Questions

June 22, 2025

## Acts 21:15-23:11 When Following Jesus Brings Discouragement & Pain



1. Share a time or season when in trying to obey Jesus, it seemed like life only got harder. How did that make you feel?

2. Read Acts 21:18-24.

What do we learn about this church and their understanding of God's grace to all people?

How a church can be led by the apostles for 25 years and still misunderstand the Gospel to this degree?

3. Read Acts 23:1-5.

What is Paul's understanding of insulting leaders, and what relevance does this have for Christians today?

4. In his past 48 hours we see Paul get arrested, almost killed by a mob, beaten, almost killed by another mob, try multiple discouraging attempts at witnessing, and then he's thrown in prison. All of this while trying to obey what he felt God was telling him to do.

Read Acts 23:10-11 and describe how Paul might have felt.

Why would verse 11 be so encouraging to him?

5. What expectations do we as Christians have of avoiding hardship, pain, failure, and trials even when obeying Jesus. What should Acts 23:11 mean for us in these situations?

6. When you're in a season of discouragement or feel like you've failed, what "voices" are usually the loudest in your head? (e.g., shame, fear, anxiety, self-criticism). What is one practical thing you could do to quiet that noise and listen for Jesus' voice instead?

7. James used the illustration of the famous pianist, Paderewski, playing a beautiful counter-melody to a little boy's clumsy "Chopsticks." Are there any areas of your life right now that you feel like you're just "playing chopsticks" - fumbling, making a mess of things, or feeling like your efforts aren't good enough? What does it look like to "take courage" in the midst of it?

8. Pray for one another.

**When Following Jesus Brings Discouragement & Pain****Acts 21:27–32, 35-36 (NLT)**

The seven days were almost ended when some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the Temple and roused a mob against him. They grabbed him, yelling, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who preaches against our people everywhere and tells everybody to disobey the Jewish laws. He speaks against the Temple—and even defiles this holy place by bringing in Gentiles." (For earlier that day they had seen him in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus, and they assumed Paul had taken him into the Temple.)

The whole city was rocked by these accusations, and a great riot followed. Paul was grabbed and dragged out of the Temple, and immediately the gates were closed behind him. As they were trying to kill him, word reached the commander of the Roman regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately called out his soldiers and officers and ran down among the crowd. When the mob saw the commander and the troops coming, they stopped beating Paul...

As Paul reached the stairs, the mob grew so violent the soldiers had to lift him to their shoulders to protect him. And the crowd followed behind, shouting, "Kill him, kill him!"

**Acts 21:14 (NLT)**

When it was clear that we couldn't persuade him, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

**Acts 21:18–22 (NLT)**

The next day Paul went with us to meet with James, and all the elders of the Jerusalem church were present. After greeting them, Paul gave a detailed account of the things God had accomplished among the Gentiles through his ministry. After hearing this, they praised God. And then they said, "You know, dear brother, how many thousands of Jews have also believed, and they all follow the law of Moses very seriously. But the Jewish believers here in Jerusalem have been told that you are teaching all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn their backs on the laws of Moses. They've heard that you teach them not to circumcise their children or follow other Jewish customs. What should we do? They will certainly hear that you have come.

**Acts 21:23–22:24 (NLT)**

Here's what we want you to do. We have four men here who have completed their vow. Go with them to the Temple and join them in the purification ceremony, paying for them to have their heads ritually shaved. Then everyone will know that the rumors are all false and that you yourself observe the Jewish laws.

**Acts 21:27–32 (NLT)**

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**Acts 21:35–36 (NLT)**

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**Acts 21:39–40 (NLT)**

... "Please, let me talk to these people." The commander agreed, so Paul stood on the stairs and motioned to the people to be quiet. Soon a deep silence enveloped the crowd, and he addressed them in their own language, Aramaic.

**Acts 22:21–23 (NLT)**

"But the Lord said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!' " The crowd listened until Paul said that word [Gentiles]. Then they all began to shout, "Away with such a fellow! He isn't fit to live!" They yelled, threw off their coats, and tossed handfuls of dust into the air.

**Acts 22:24 (NLT)**

The commander brought Paul inside and ordered him lashed with whips to make him confess his crime. He wanted to find out why the crowd had become so furious.

**Acts 23:1-2 (NLT)**

Gazing intently at the high council, Paul began: "Brothers, I have always lived before God with a clear conscience!" Instantly Ananias the high priest commanded those close to Paul to slap him on the mouth.

**Acts 23:4-5 (NLT)**

"Do you dare to insult God's high priest?" "I'm sorry, brothers. I didn't realize he was the high priest," Paul replied, "for the Scriptures say, 'You must not speak evil of any of your rulers.'"

**Acts 23:3,5 (NLT)**

"God will slap you, you corrupt hypocrite! What kind of judge are you to break the law yourself by ordering me struck like that?"

"I'm sorry, brothers... for the Scriptures say, 'You must not speak evil of any of your rulers.'"

**Acts 23:10 (NLT)**

As the conflict grew more violent, the commander was afraid they would tear Paul apart. So he ordered his soldiers to go and rescue him by force and take him back to the fortress.

**Acts 23:11 (NIV)**

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."

**Matthew 14:27 (NIV)**

"**Take courage!** It is I. Don't be afraid."

**John 16:33 (NASB)**

These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but **take courage**; I have overcome the world."

**Where is Jesus telling you to simply keep playing?**