



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

"RIDING THROUGH"

THE BOOK OF ACTS-LESSON 22

Paul had been warned to stay away from Jerusalem a number of times. He chose to obey what he believed was God's will for him, rather than the advice of his friends. In chapter 21, Paul arrived in Jerusalem. Within a week's time, he was already arrested and falsely accused of teaching against the law and defiling the temple (21:28). Now in chapter 22, Paul gives his defense before the crowd.

First Day

1. Read Acts 21:37-40 and Acts 22:1-30. Do you remember this story?
2. What is the main point of this chapter? What is the key verse?
Are there any repeated words or phrases?
3. What was Paul's strategy?
4. To whom is Paul speaking?
5. Why did the commander allow him to speak at all? (21:37-40)

Paul is simply giving his testimony to the people of Israel. We studied Paul's conversion in Lesson 9, so we will only be looking at some of the key points. (You may review lesson 9 to refresh your memory.)

6. Read Acts 22:1-23 again. What language was he speaking in? Why did this help the people settle down?

7. Why does Paul mention his upbringing in verse 3?

God used Paul's past for His glory. God had a perfect plan for Paul; and everything that Paul experienced as he grew up, God used to mold him, shape him, and prepare him for service. Paul had a violent past, but God made him a new creature. He didn't erase his past, but He pardoned his sin and used those experiences to shape Paul's future.

So often we look at our past with either guilt, anger, or bitterness. No matter how painful or awful our past was, God can use it for His glory. Your past can either be used to build your character, or can cause you to live in bitterness.

8. What's in your past? How has God used your past to build Godly character? Has your past made you stronger, and caused you to learn to depend on God?

9. Has your past made you resentful and angry? God wants to take all that pain and replace it with His joy. He can give you the strength to not only let go of your past, but to walk in victory and freedom. Will you let Him?

Paul didn't allow the guilt of his past sin to keep him from serving His God. He understood God's grace and forgiveness. He not only understood it, he accepted it and rejoiced in it!

10. How can resentment and anger affect our relationship with the Lord?
How can it affect our life?
11. What "letters" is Paul referring to in verse 5? Read Acts 9:2.
12. Explain why Paul considered himself "zealous toward God" (vs 3) before he was saved. Give other verses to support your answer.

This ends our lesson for today. No matter what your past is, you have a **"Reason to Rejoice"** today. He pulled you out from the miry clay and set you on the rock. He will pardon you, heal you, comfort you -- He loves you like no other. Wait a minute, that's more than one reason!

Memory Verse of the Week: "And now, why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts 22:16

Second Day

Review your memory verse. Have you called on the name of the Lord? Why are you waiting?

Today we will continue to review Paul's testimony.

1. Read Acts 22:1-23 again.

2. What two questions did Paul ask the Lord right away? (vs 8-10)

3. Remember back to the day you were saved. Do you remember the first questions that you asked the Lord? What were they? Did He answer them?

4. Do you remember what the first thing was that you felt God told you to do? What was it?

5. Jesus asked Paul why he was persecuting Him (vs 7). As Christians, what are some ways that we can still "persecute" Jesus?

6. How was Paul led to Damascus? (vs 11)

7. Why was humility one of the first lessons Paul needed to learn from God?

When Paul arrived in Damascus, he met a man named Ananias. Remember this "forgotten hero" from lesson 9?

8. Had God prepared Ananias' heart for this meeting? Read Acts 9:10-19. What was Ananias' first reaction? Why?

9. Is God preparing your heart for some meeting or circumstance? Are you having the same reaction? What did Ananias do? What should you do?

10. According to Ananias, what was God's will for Paul? Acts 22:14-15, Acts 9:15-16.

This concludes our lesson. What is God's will for you today? Think about it!

Third Day

Write your memory verse. Have you been baptized? Why are you waiting?

1. Read Acts 22:1-22 again.

Paul was concerned with God's will for His life. It's important to remember that we are supposed to be seeking God's will, not our own.

2. What do we **KNOW** about God's will? Read the following Scriptures and write what they tell us about the will of God:

a. 2 Peter 3:9 _____.

b. 1 Peter 4:2 _____.

c. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 _____.

d. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 _____.

e. Ephesians 6:6 _____.

f. Romans 12:2 _____.

g. 1 John 5:14-15 _____.

3. In Psalm 143, David asks God to "teach him to do His will." Read Psalm 143 and list the things that David specifically asked for.

All of God's commands in Scripture are His will for us. Have you ever thought about it like that?

4. According to Acts 5:29, how was Paul in God's will?

5. Are you following the example of Jesus in Matthew 26:39 concerning God's will for your life?

6. Find a story in the Old Testament about someone who obeyed God's will, no matter what the cost. Write the Scripture reference. Meditate on that example throughout the day. How does it encourage you? How does it convict you?

In Acts 22:20, Paul brings up his role in Stephen's death again. He still feels responsible for being a part of that sin. By Paul taking the responsibility of that sin, he was accepting the consequences instead of being angry at God. He doesn't condemn himself or walk around as a defeated man. He obviously was a man who believed in and accepted God's grace and mercy in his life, and walked victoriously.

Many times Christians become angry at God when they are reaping the consequences of their own sinful behavior. It's important that we take responsibility for our sins as Paul does, and allow the consequences to strengthen us, instead of anger us. Sin is always our fault, not God's, or anyone else's.

7. Ask the Lord to search your heart today. Is there anything happening in your life that is a consequence of your sin? Have you taken responsibility for it, or are you blaming someone else?

8. Let's go back to Acts chapter 22. According to verse 22, what caused the people to respond so angrily?
9. What did they say about Paul in verse 22?
10. Has your testimony ever caused a similar reaction from people? Can you share with your group? How did it make you feel? Defeated or determined?
11. What was the most important part of Paul's testimony?

We'll close today with one last thought. In 1 Timothy 1:12-17, Paul is telling Timothy how thankful he is that God allowed him to be in the ministry, despite his past. He called himself a former blasphemer, persecutor, and an insolent man. But he obtained mercy through Christ Jesus, so that he may be a pattern to those who would believe. He is an example and a testimony of what God can do with a sinner, of whom Paul says, he is the chief! (Although I think I may have him beat!)

Let's remember to look at Paul's life as a reminder of God's mercy towards us. Have you done anything that God can't forgive? The answer, of course, is no. His love is bigger than any of your sins. Now isn't that a **"Reason to Rejoice"**?

Fourth Day

Review your memory verse. Rejoice today that He washed away your sins!

The people got pretty angry when Paul mentioned that God's plan included the Gentiles! They probably thought his statement confirmed their accusation that he brought a Gentile into the temple. Watch out, Paul! They're throwing dirt! (vs 23)

1. Read Acts 22:23-30. Describe the people's reaction in verse 23.

2. Why was the commander going to have him scourged? (vs 24)
3. The centurion got a little nervous when Paul asked him a question. What did he ask him? What did the centurion do?
4. What did Paul say was the difference between his citizenship and the commander's?

Remember that Rome was the ruling power during this time. To increase that power, they would grant Roman citizenship to certain non-Romans. A Roman citizen could not be imprisoned or bound without first being granted a trial. They also could not be beaten or scourged to make them confess (vs 24). If a Roman citizen was not happy with his trial, he could appeal his case, and it would be heard in Rome.

5. This happened to Paul and Silas before. Do you recall what chapter? How was the reaction of these soldiers similar?
6. It seems like the commander was curious about Paul. What did he do after he released him from his bonds? (vs 30)
7. Paul was going to have to speak to the Sanhedrin. He obviously had no time to prepare a sermon, or jot down some notes. What did Paul tell Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2? How was Paul an example of this?
8. We should be ready to share with others when God says "now". What are we promised in John 15:26 and John 16:7-14?

9. Do you rely on the Holy Spirit when you try to share with others? Have you ever tried to share with someone in your own strength, without the Holy Spirit? What was the result?

10. We are called to trust that the Holy Spirit will show us what to say. We are also told to "study to show thyself approved" (2 Timothy 2:15), and that "the heart of the righteous studies how to answer" (Proverbs 15:28). How do these two truths fit together?

11. What are we promised in Psalm 119:165 if we love and obey His Word?

This ends our lesson for today. Our theme Scripture for our study is in Jeremiah 15:16 where Jeremiah says that God's Word is the joy of his heart. David also loved God's Word. In Psalm 119:111, David says, "Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart." Does God's Word cause your heart to rejoice?

Fifth Day

Write your verse by memory.

Next week we will look at Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin. It promises to be another exciting chapter in the life of Paul! For now, let's take a few moments to reflect on chapter 22 and what God has for each of us in this chapter.

1. Meditate on your memory verse for a few minutes. How does it speak to you? Is there anything in your life about which God can say, "Why are you waiting?"

