

## **Lessons Learned From A Lad** **Acts 23:12-35**

### **Introduction:**

1. While the apostle Paul was in the custody of the Roman government in Jerusalem, a conspiracy developed against Paul.
2. Forty of Paul's enemies united themselves with a vow that none of them would partake of food until Paul was dead. vs. 12-14
  - This is the definition of unpopular! When people start giving up food until they can get revenge, you know there is some deep-seated hatred.
3. After this, they devised an evil plot whereby they could kill Paul. vs. 15
4. But here in our text, God confounded their evil plans and protected Paul from their murderous plot.
5. What was the centerpiece in God's plan to protect Paul? It was Paul's nephew, a young boy!
6. This young lad is only mentioned once in Scripture, but God used him mightily.
7. There are some wonderful spiritual lessons that we can learn from this little lad, and those will be the focus of this message.

### **Lesson # 1 – Always be alert to the enemy.**

1. Some place in Jerusalem, this boy overheard Paul's enemies talking, and he discovered their conspiracy to kill Paul (vs. 16). What an alert young man!
2. He was alert to the danger that Paul was in, and he was alert to his own personal duty to make this conspiracy known to the right people.
3. Christian, are you alert to your enemy? You say, "I sure am. I keep my eye out for that boss at work." Did you know your boss isn't your enemy? Nor is your next-door neighbor, or your co-worker, or your parents, or your husband, or your wife.
4. You need desperately to understand that the devil is your enemy, and you are in a spiritual warfare. Ephesians 6:11-12
5. Think about it. A person does not last very long in war if he is not alert.
6. This is why God has admonished us to be sober and vigilant (watchful; attentive to discover and avoid danger). 1 Peter 5:8
  - Satan is our enemy. But Satan will use people to execute his evil schemes, and we need to be alert.
7. Our enemy is relentless. We see that exemplified here in our text. They are:
  - Dedicated – They were a determined bunch that kept trying to kill Paul over and over again.
  - Diversified – The mob attack didn't work, so they tried to ambush Paul as he was being taken to the Sanhedrin.
  - Deceitful – The request to the Sanhedrin was all a big sham and ploy.
8. Christian, this is your enemy – Satan. He is dedicated to destroying Christian lives. He is diversified in his attacks, and he is extremely tricky and deceitful.
9. First lesson learned from this lad – always be alert to the enemy!

## **Lesson # 2 – Always be decisive. Delay can be deadly.**

1. The death of Paul was planned for the next day. The next step was for the Sanhedrin to request of Lysias that Paul be brought to their council. Hence, the conspiracy needed to be exposed immediately, even before the council sent an invitation to Lysias.
2. Any delay in exposing it would be deadly. This young boy had to act with great haste, which he did. He heard it and went (vs. 16). What if he had prayed about it for 24 hours? While he was praying, Paul would be dead!
3. There are many times in the Christian life when we must act quickly without delay. Do a study of the words “*haste*” and “*quickly*.” Acts 22:18; Matthew 28:7; Luke 19:5-6
  - There is a time to get with it, NOW! GO! Sometimes we get so involved in organizing, analyzing, and scrutinizing that, by the time we’re done, it’s too late. The ship has already sailed, and we missed it! We end up a day late and a dollar short.
4. There is a time to wait, but not always. You need to act quickly:
  - In a time of temptation. Genesis 39:12
    - Joseph “*fled and got him out*.” He didn’t say, “Wait a minute and let me pray about this.”
    - If it’s right, then just do it. Be quick and decisive. If it is wrong, then flee. Delay can be deadly.
  - In a time of opportunity. Genesis 19:22; Numbers 16:46; Exodus 14:15
    - We can have spiritual advantages and opportunities. But if we do not act quickly, we will waste them and fail in our responsibility.
    - Opportunities seldom stick around very long. They open the door for us for a short time, and then the door closes. Those who are not prompt about using their opportunities will lose them.

## **Lesson # 3 – We must act with prudence if we are to experience God’s promises.**

1. God had promised to protect Paul in verse 11. After hearing of this conspiracy, what if this boy had said to himself, “God has promised to protect my uncle Paul, so I’m not going to concern myself with it”?
2. Or, what if Paul would have disregarded his nephew’s warning and said, “Don’t worry, God has promised to take care of me”? This would have been foolish thinking.
3. Paul did not react this way at all. Paul acted responsibly on the information his nephew brought. vs. 17
4. Because this young boy and Paul acted with prudence, God did some amazing things, and He did protect Paul and preserve his life. vs. 18-35
  - How often does a centurion do what a prisoner tells him to do? vs. 17-18
  - What are the odds that a chief captain would give this little boy a private hearing, and then act on what he said? vs. 18-22
  - The captain ordered 570 soldiers to escort Paul out of town. Talk about protection! vs. 23

- He even provided Paul an animal to ride on! vs. 24
5. God more than kept His promise to protect Paul. But what does all of this teach us?
  6. God's promises do not eliminate our need to act with prudence. Divine promises do not take away our responsibilities. Had Paul and his nephew sat on their hands and done nothing, Paul would have been killed.
  7. It is important to understand that most of God's promises involve responsible action on our part if the promises are to be realized. 2 Corinthians 9:7-8; Philippians 4:6-7; Galatians 6:9
    - Many times we blame God and accuse God of not fulfilling promises, but the blame lies with us, not God. We were negligent to carry out our duties.
  8. Promises are to encourage us to action, not to make us careless or lazy.

**In Conclusion:**

1. Isn't it amazing the things that kids can teach us? This little nephew of Paul's was something else.
2. There are some lessons here that we do not need to miss. This little lad and his actions teach us to always be alert in our Christian walk, to be decisive, and to act with prudence.