

An aerial photograph of Jerusalem, Israel, showing the city's dense urban landscape. The Dome of the Rock, a prominent Islamic shrine with a large golden dome, is the central focus. The city is built on a hillside, with various buildings and structures visible. The foreground shows a sandy, open area, possibly a park or a field. The overall scene is captured in a slightly desaturated, historical style.

The CHURCH Series

Part 18 - Jerusalem

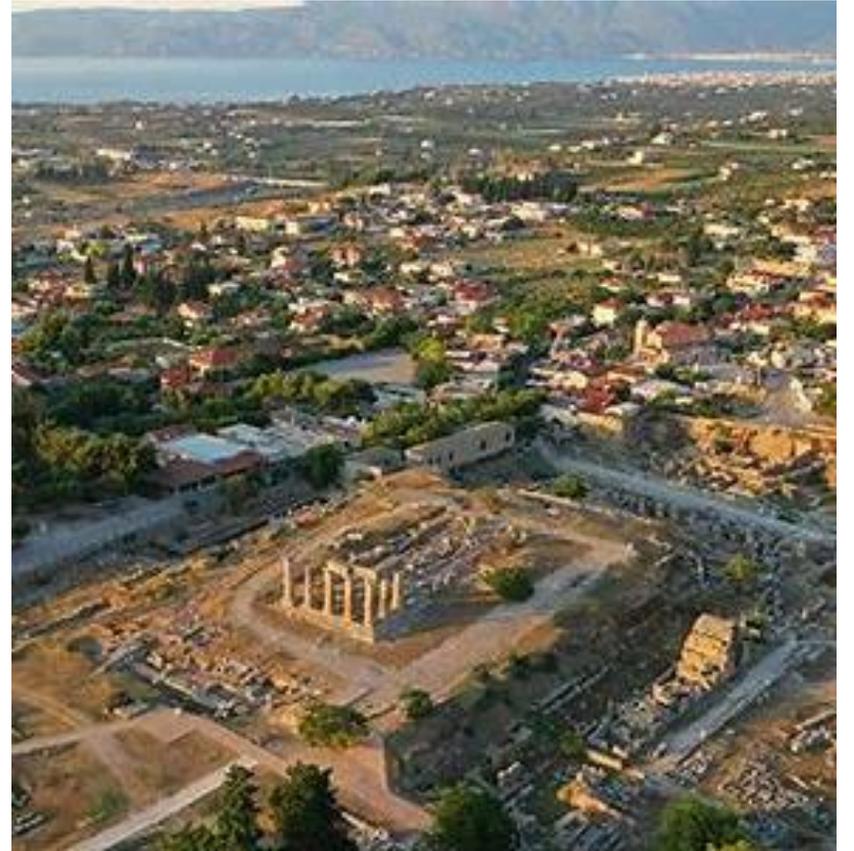
Introduction...

- In our last session, we touched on Paul's third and last mission trip away from his spiritual base – the City of Antioch.
- We suggested that you read the chapters 18-21, reflecting on its contents.
- We will summarise briefly again these chapters before we continue with Paul's arrival back in Jerusalem – which marks the beginning of the end for Paul's freedom.



Chapter 18 - Corinth

- Paul travels to Corinth after leaving Athens, where he meets Aquila and Priscilla,
- Jewish tentmakers who had recently come from Rome.
- Paul stays with them and works while also preaching in the synagogue.
- Many Corinthians believe in Christ, and Paul stays in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching.
- After Paul's success in Corinth, the Jewish leaders oppose him, bringing him before the proconsul Gallio.
- Gallio dismisses the case, stating that it's a religious matter, not a legal one.
- Paul leaves Corinth and sails to Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila.
- They stop in Ephesus, where Paul preaches briefly before continuing his journey to Antioch.



Chapter 19 - Ephesus

- Paul arrives in Ephesus and finds a group of disciples who had only received John the Baptist's baptism.
- Paul baptizes them in the name of Jesus, and they receive the Holy Spirit.
- Paul teaches in the synagogue and then in the school of Tyrannus for two years, and many people in Asia hear the word of the Lord.
- God works extraordinary miracles through Paul, even allowing handkerchiefs touched by him to heal the sick.
- Many people renounce their magic practices and burn their books, showing the transformation Christianity brings.
- A silversmith named Demetrius, whose business of making silver shrines for Artemis is threatened by Paul's teachings, incites a riot.
- The crowd gathers in the theater, but Paul is prevented from speaking. The riot ends when the city clerk calms the crowd and dismisses them.



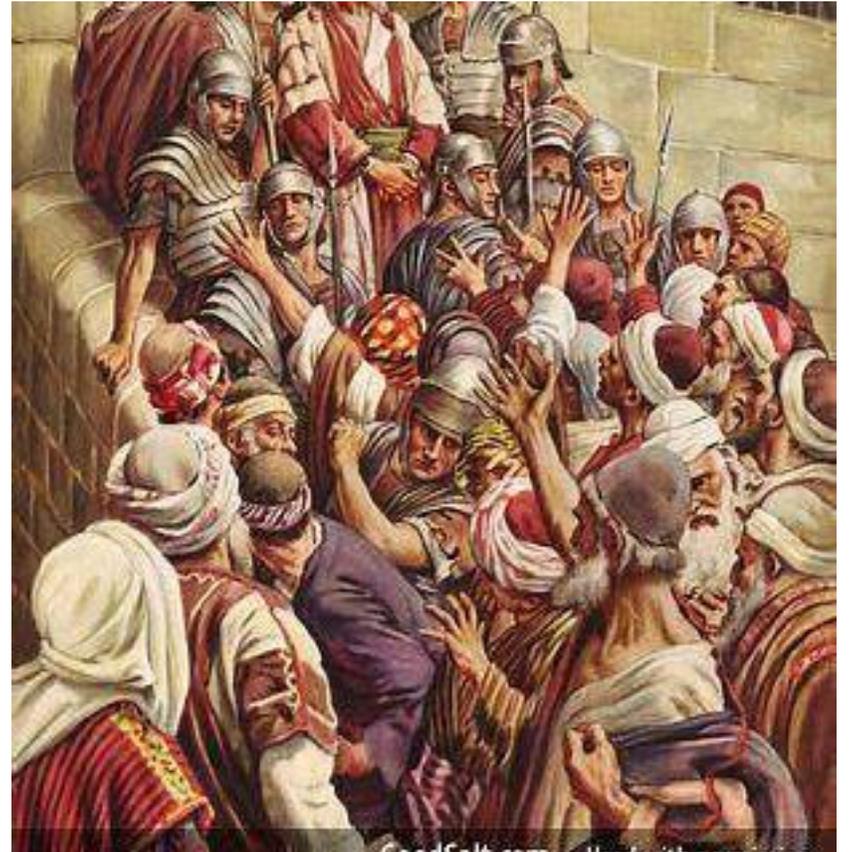
Chapter 20 - Farewell

- Paul travels through Macedonia and Greece, encouraging the believers.
- He stays in Greece for three months, then plans to return to Syria, but learns of a plot against him by the Jews, so he changes his route.
- In Troas, during a long sermon, a young man named Eutychus falls asleep and falls from a window. He is presumed dead, but Paul revives him.
- Paul meets with the elders of the Ephesian church in Miletus.
- He gives them a heartfelt farewell speech, warning them of dangers ahead, both from external threats and internal divisions.
- He entrusts them to God's care and the message of grace.



Chapter 21 - Jerusalem

- Paul continues his journey toward Jerusalem, despite warnings from believers, including Agabus the prophet,
- who foretells that Paul will be bound and handed over to the Gentiles. Paul insists on going, saying he is ready to suffer for Christ.
- Upon arriving, Paul meets with James and the other church leaders. They explain the situation:
- many Jews have heard that Paul teaches Jews to abandon the law, so they ask him to participate in a purification ritual to show he respects the law.
- Paul agrees to do so
- Some Jews from Asia see Paul in the temple and stir up a crowd, accusing him of defiling the temple by bringing Gentiles into it.
- A mob attacks Paul, and he is seized by the Romans, but before they can beat him,
- Paul speaks to the commander in Greek and requests to address the people.



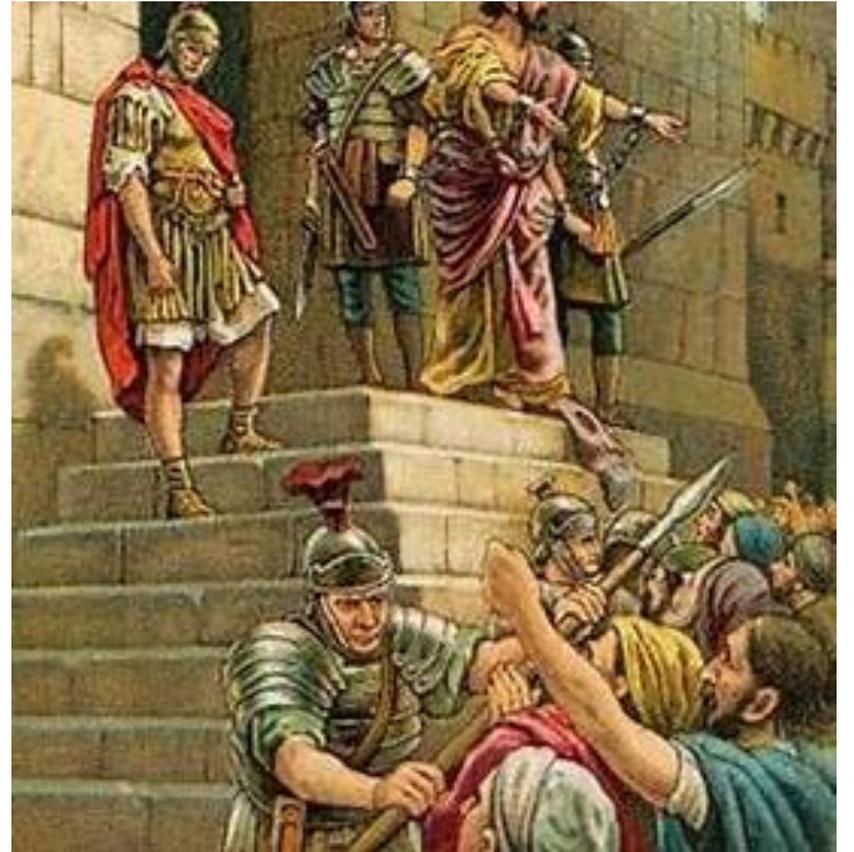
Lessons from Chapter 22

- *Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.”² And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent.*
- *Then he said:³ “I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel,*
- *taught according to the strictness of our fathers’ law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.*
- *⁴ I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,*
- *⁵ as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren,*
- *and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.*



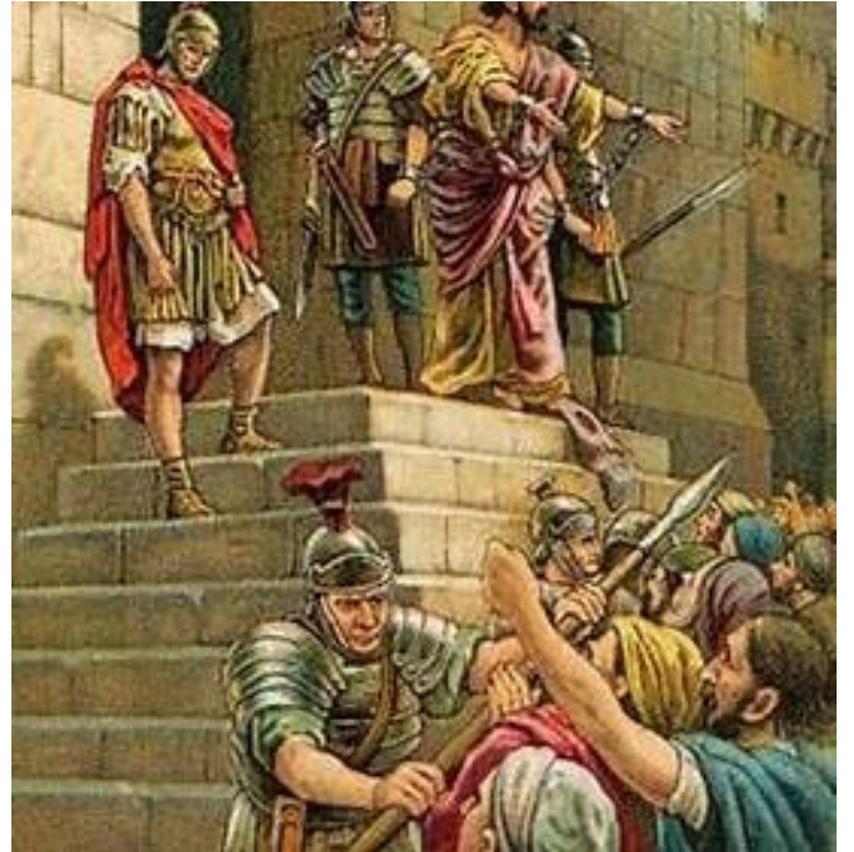
Your Testimony

- Sharing one's personal story of faith can be a powerful way to witness to others.
- Paul recounts his dramatic conversion, showing how his life was radically transformed by Jesus.
- When we share our testimonies, we give others a window into the life-changing power of God.
- Everyone, of us knows how we met Jesus and were saved.
- If you don't have a testimony of salvation, you might want to reflect on IF you have really met Jesus or met the Church instead...!
- Your testimony is YOURS! No one can share it like you. Reflect on your story and get ready to share it with others.



Not Fit to Live!

- *22 And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said,*
- *“Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!”²*
- *3 Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air,*
- *24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him.*
- *25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by,*
- *“Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?”*



Courage...

- Paul demonstrated courage in speaking out, even in the face of opposition.
- He was willing to address a hostile crowd and share the gospel, knowing it could result in his arrest or worse.
- Stand firm in your faith and speak the truth, even when facing opposition.
- Trust in God's protection and timing, knowing that He can use difficult situations for His glory.



Testify!

- Paul did not simply recount a vague story of faith.
- He articulated specific details of his conversion, his calling, and his commission from God.
- This shows that understanding our faith deeply enables us to defend it clearly and effectively.
- You must know your own story inside out and how the Lord rescued you.
- This will impact someone else. You never know how your testimony will touch another person.
- Share it!!



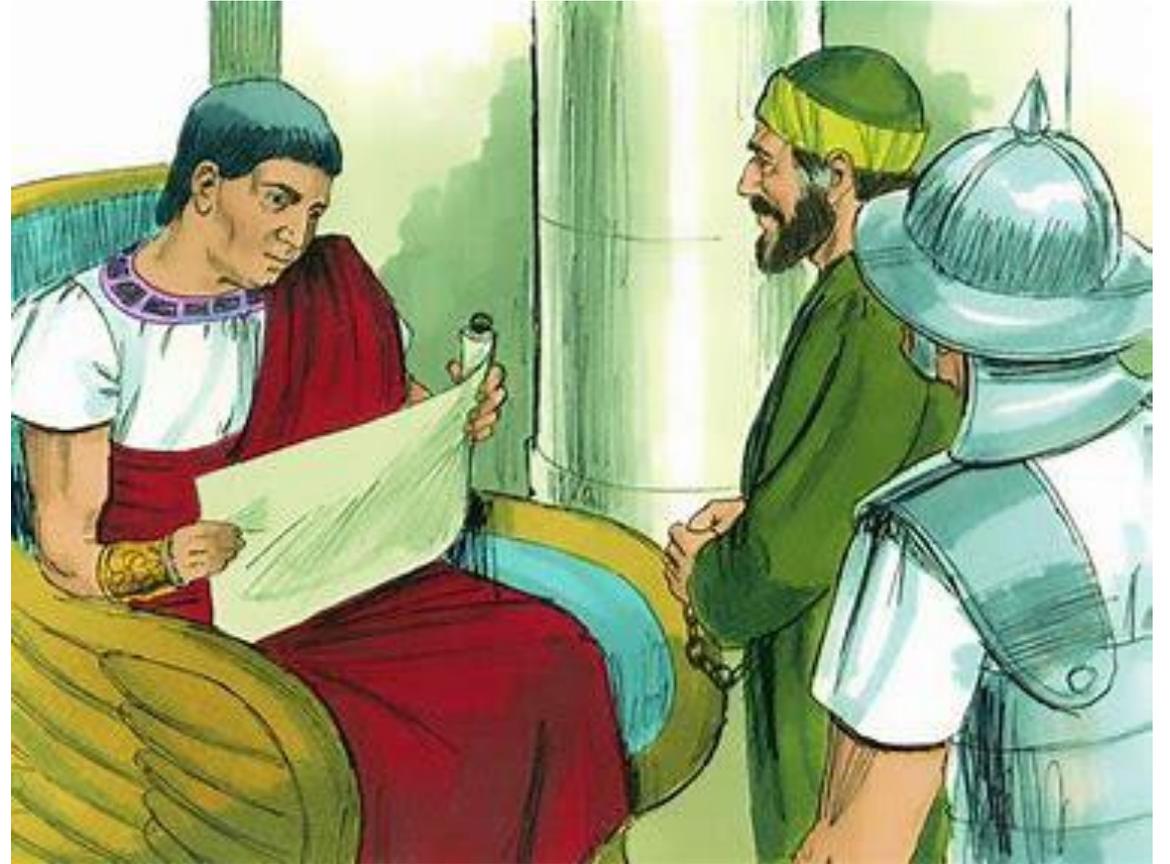
From the Heart...

- Invest time in learning Scripture and your faith.
- understanding your beliefs and being prepared to explain why you believe what you do: is VITAL!
- This will help you speak with clarity and confidence when opportunities to share the gospel arise.
- Do not embellish your story. By all means be articulate within your own capacity but share from your heart.



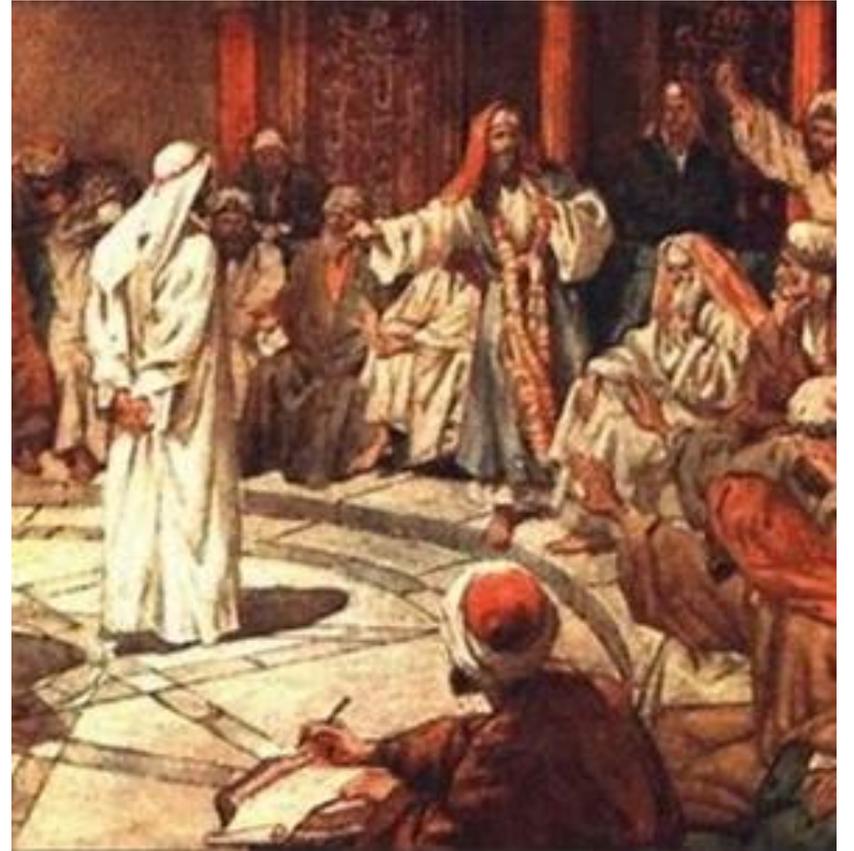
Know Your Rights....

- In these days of opposition to the Gospel, Christians need to know their rights.
- Paul highlighted very quickly that he was a Roman citizen and therefore how he was treated (or mistreated) had to be well thought through by the authorities.
- In your workplace, In your society, know your rights and how you can or cannot be treated.
- Ultimately, we need to be directed by the Holy Spirit; but we need to walk in God's knowledge and Wisdom.



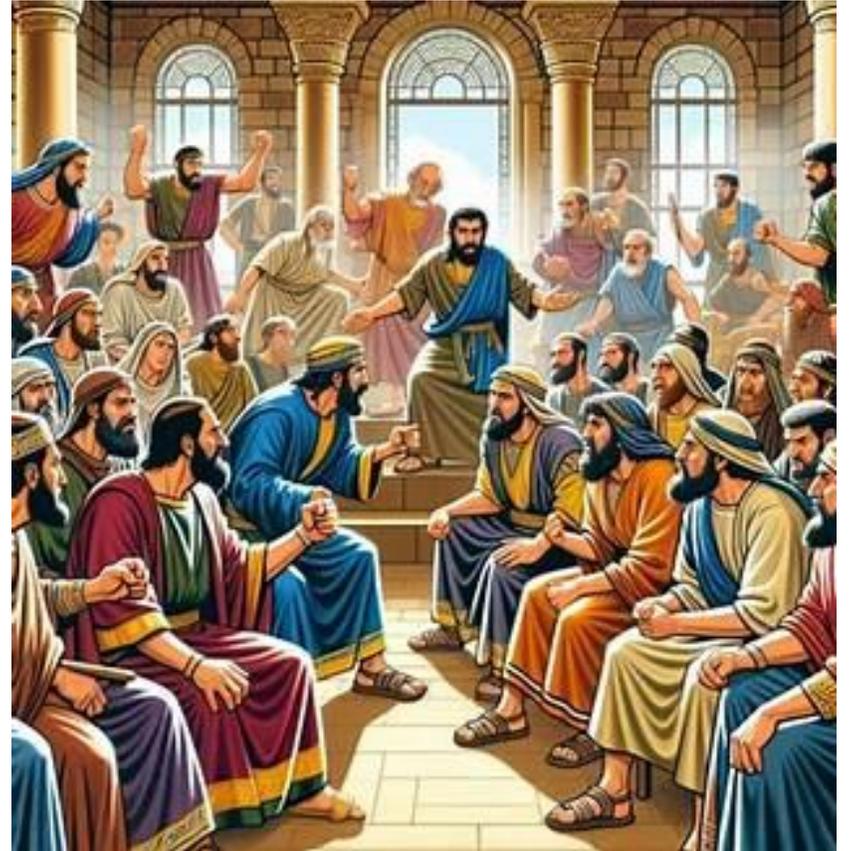
Chapter 23...

- *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!”*
- *⁷And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided.*
- *⁸For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.*
- *⁹Then 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.”*



Hmmm...

- In Acts 23, Paul cleverly uses the division between the Pharisees and Sadducees to his advantage.
- When the council turns hostile, Paul declares, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 23:6).
- This statement divides the council, as the Pharisees believe in the resurrection,
- while the Sadducees do not. Paul shows great wisdom in navigating a dangerous situation by using what he knows about the council's divisions.



Agbari...

- In times of conflict, it's important to approach situations with wisdom,
- understanding the people and circumstances involved.
- Wisdom may help defuse tension and allow you to make the most of difficult situations.
- It is an asset to be quick-witted in the Holy Spirit. Use your brain!
- *Be shrewd as a serpent, yet innocent as a dove...
Matthew 10:16*
- Agbari – Yoruba word meaning street wise or quick witted.



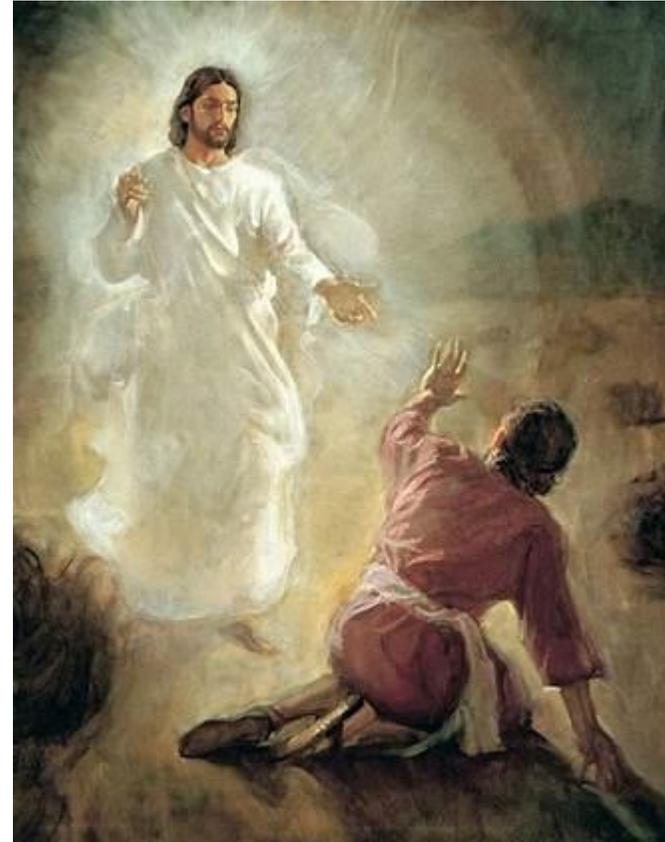
Prayerful...

- In Acts 23:11, the Lord appears to Paul in a vision, encouraging him and reminding him that he will testify about Christ in Rome.
- God assures Paul that His plan is still unfolding, even in the midst of Paul's difficult circumstances.
- This moment emphasizes that God is present and guiding, even when we face hardship.
- In our trials, we can find comfort in knowing that God is with us and that He has a purpose for our lives, even in difficult times.
- We should trust that He will guide us through challenges.



Intervention...

- After Paul's trial before the Sanhedrin, a plot is hatched to kill him (Acts 23:12-15).
- However, Paul's nephew hears of the plot and informs him, leading to Paul's safety.
- This act of intervention shows God's providence, as He uses people and circumstances to protect His servants.
- Prayer is an essential part of our relationship with God.
- It's also important to trust that God is at work behind the scenes, orchestrating events for our good, even when we don't see how things will unfold.



HOMework

- Memorise this Scripture
- *14 Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will,*
- *and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.*
- *15 For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. Acts 22:14-15*
- Listen to this Song with loved ones and sing along – My Testimony – Elevation Music
- <https://youtu.be/dyOrS3kY8BY?si=vRuWRGK5mq8wKOUa>

