

# Paul's Arrest

## [PREPARATION]

### ✦ GETTING READY

Describe any time you have been falsely accused of something. What happened? How did you respond? How were you able to prove your innocence?

Read Acts 21:15–23:35.

Ask God to use these Scriptures to give you the strength and courage to trust in Jesus and follow Him on mission for the gospel, wherever it takes you.

## [THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE]

### ✦ KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

Disciples of Jesus follow Him on mission for the gospel wherever it takes them, trusting He will give them the strength to persevere and equip them with all that they need.

### ✦ THEOLOGY APPLIED

In his arrest in Jerusalem and speeches before the Jews and the Sanhedrin, we see how Paul endured personal suffering to preach the gospel where God had called him to go. Throughout church history and even today, we have seen many missionaries who went into dangerous situations, trusting God to protect them through it but also accepting that if they die, they die. And that would actually be wonderful because then they would be in heaven with Jesus. The question is, does the average modern American Christian in the church pews today have this attitude? We applaud those who are willing to be martyrs, but many of us aren't even willing to be made fun of for the gospel. We aren't willing to step out of our comfort zone to help someone in need. Or we don't feel any real urgency to share our faith, much less feel like it's our only purpose in being alive. This lesson, like so much of Acts, is a wakeup call for the modern American church. Do our lives look anything like the early disciples of Jesus? Do our churches look like theirs? Do we understand what discipleship really is?

## ✚ MEDITATE

"[Jesus] said, 'Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome' (Acts 23:11).

## GETTING STARTED

+This section will introduce the lesson by identifying the main point of the passage and offering a preliminary application of it.

**QUESTION** *How have you seen people show courage and strength in sharing the gospel in dangerous situations?*

**QUESTION** *How have you felt God calling you to step outside your comfort zone to share the gospel?*

In Paul's arrest and speeches before the Jews and the Sanhedrin, we see his incredible courage and commitment to the mission. He had one single purpose in life, to share the gospel. That was it. Nothing else. No matter what the personal cost to himself. Paul's example should inspire us to also step outside of our comfort zones to share the gospel in every situation. To ask God to use us and send us into the world, even into scary situations. To ask Him to give us the boldness to share the gospel and also the wisdom to do know how to do it in the most effective way. To ask Him to show us just where He wants us to go and who He wants us to reach and give us what we need to fulfill that mission and orchestrate things so we can do what He's calling us to do.

## ✚ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

+In his arrest and speeches before the Jews and the Sanhedrin, Paul boldly proclaimed the gospel without concern for his own safety. He trusted that God would orchestrate the events so Paul could be in front of the audiences God wanted him to preach to. In chapter 21, when he was arrested, Paul didn't demand to be released, though he legally could have, because he knew he needed to preach the gospel to the Jews who were attacking him. In chapter 22, he preached the gospel to the Jews, trying to meet them where they were, speaking their language and sharing his testimony of how Jesus changed his life. Though he could have demand to be released again, he didn't because he knew God wanted him to speak before the Sanhedrin. In chapter 23, before the Sanhedrin, Paul used their own division against them, then the tribune helped him escape their murder plot so he could go to Felix and share the gospel there to an even

more influential audience. In all of it, Paul trusted in Jesus, spoke the truth boldly, and followed wherever He led, even if it meant danger for himself.

1. *Paul's Arrest*

2. *Paul's Speech to the Jews*

3. *Paul Before the Sanhedrin*

## **[GOING DEEPER]**

+ This section will follow the points given above and look deeper into Acts 21:15–23:35.

### *1. Paul's Arrest*

#### **+ READ ACTS 21:15–40.**

**QUESTION** *Why were the Jews in Jerusalem upset with Paul? What was their misunderstanding?*

**QUESTION** *How did their anger turn violent? Why might they have felt justified in their violence?*

Paul and his coworkers went to Jerusalem, even though they knew it would be dangerous for him there. In Jerusalem, they stayed with Mnason of Cyprus, one of the earliest disciples (like Barnabas) of the church from the time of Pentecost. His name means “remembering.” The church at Jerusalem received them gladly. Paul shared all God had done through them among the Gentiles, and the Jerusalem church leaders rejoiced. There was no conflict between Paul and the Jerusalem church leaders. In verse 25, the Jerusalem leaders even mentioned the decision they had made together at the Jerusalem Council and the letter they had sent to the Gentile churches (Act 15). This was 59 AD, eleven years after the Jerusalem Council (48 AD), and Paul and the Jerusalem church leaders were still on the same page about this issue.

But some Jewish Christians who were “zealous for the law” were upset because they had been told Paul was not only teaching that Gentiles didn’t have to be circumcised but also teaching Jewish Christians to forsake all Jewish practices, customs, and laws completely (v. 21). We know that’s not true, because Paul took a Nazarite vow in Acts 18:18. From the way the Jerusalem leaders talked to Paul about it, it sounds like they had been trying to dispel this rumor, that Paul wasn’t doing anything wrong and they all agreed

with him, but they hadn't been listening. They suggested Paul show them by participating in the Nazirite vow purification ceremony of four men who were under a vow at this time. Paul didn't have to do this, but it showed his willingness to "become all things to all people" to meet people where they are with the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:20–22).

James said there were "many myriads" of Jews in Jerusalem who had come to faith in Jesus. "Myriad" can mean "ten thousand" or, figuratively, an indefinitely large number of people, too large to count. This would have been a significant percentage of the Jewish population in Jerusalem. The church had done a good job spreading the gospel in Jerusalem.

Paul said he "became all things to all people" in order to win some for the gospel. He described living like a Gentile with the Gentiles and living like a Jew with the Jews. He interacted with Greek philosophers in the lecture halls and the Athenians in the Areopagus, speaking their language to share the gospel and meet them where they are. And he circumcised Timothy, even though he didn't believe Timothy should have to be circumcised, because he knew not doing so would be a stumbling block for the Jews they would be trying to witness to on their journey. Paul knew he didn't have to follow the Mosaic law, even as a Jewish Christian, but he had no problem doing it if it would take away a stumbling block for the gospel to these Jews in Jerusalem.

Paul did as they suggested, and yet it still backfired on him. When the Jews from Asia (ironically where he had just been on his last missionary journey) saw him in the temple, they stirred up the crowd against him. They dragged him out of the temple and started beating him with the intent to kill him until the Roman tribune heard Jerusalem was in confusion and sent his soldiers and centurions down to stop the commotion. This may seem like a crazy overreaction to our modern minds. This kind of violence doesn't seem fitting of people who profess to follow God. But by Old Testament law, blasphemy was punishable by death. Just as Saul, before his Damascus-road encounter, believed he was doing God's work by stoning Stephen, these Jews believed beating Paul was a righteous crusade. However, if what they were doing had been righteous, they would have waited for a trial before the Sanhedrin; they wouldn't have just started beating him on the spot. This was not a righteous act of justice; it was a riot.

A tribune was the commander of the local cohort of 600 soldiers permanently housed in the fortress Antonia on the northern part of the temple mount. From their tower, the guards would have easily seen the commotion. Since it says "centurions" (plural), he took at least 160 soldiers (centurions commanded groups of 80–100 soldiers) but it could have been hundreds more. This was no small commotion. The tribune arrested Paul and ordered him to be bound with two chains before he even asked who he was or what he did. Later in the story, he would learn Paul was a Roman citizen and binding him was against the law (22:25–29). He had just been trying to stop the commotion, but he shouldn't have assumed anything, he should have asked first.

Instead of asking Paul, the tribune asked the crowd who he was and what he had done—another mistake. The crowd all started shouting different things, and he couldn't make sense of it, so he ordered Paul to be brought to the barracks of their fortress. The mob followed, crying out, "Away with him!" The crowd was so violent that Paul had to be carried by the soldiers for his safety. Again, this was not a small crowd; it was hundreds, if not thousands, of angry rioters.

As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he asked the tribune to speak to him. The tribune was surprised he knew Greek because he had assumed he was someone else—an Egyptian who had recently led a revolt against the temple of 4,000 Sicarii or "dagger men," fanatic Jewish patriots who organized political killings. Surprisingly, at this point, Paul still did not reveal he was a Roman citizen; he told him he was a Jew from Tarsus, which he called "no obscure city." Tarsus was a prominent city, and his citizenship there (not just residency) would have been a point of honor, even if he had not yet revealed his Roman citizenship. Also, emphasizing that he was a Jew would have made it more likely for the Roman tribune to let him address the crowd; it would be addressing his own people. Instead of demanding his release, which he could have done as a Roman citizen, he asked to speak to the crowd, because his goal was not his own safety, it was sharing the gospel. The true, full gospel that was inclusive of Gentiles, not just Jewish Christians.

**QUESTION** *Why is it so easy for big mobs of people to get riled up, sometimes not even realizing exactly what they're angry about? What part does misinformation play in mobs and riots like this? What about emotion? What about gossip?*

**QUESTION** *What was Paul trying to do by "becoming all things to all people"?*

**APPLICATION POINT #1** / Paul said he "became all things to all people" in order to win some for the gospel. He adapted his behavior, mindset, and presentation of the gospel to reach different audiences effectively, to speak their language and meet them where they were. Like Jesus became one of us in the incarnation, we should also become like those we are trying to reach with the gospel. For a foreign missionary that means learning the language and living immersed in their culture, not like a foreigner separate from their culture. For those of us who try to live missionally at home, this means not separating ourselves from the world into a "holy huddle" but living in the world as a light to the world. Meeting people where they are and speaking their language. Entering their world the way Jesus came to us.

**APPLICATION POINT #2** / This story shows us how a big mob of people got so riled up they were about to kill Paul. It started with misinformation. They thought he was teaching something he wasn't. They mistakenly thought he had brought a Gentile into the temple. It was exacerbated by emotion—shouting, stirring up

the crowd, violence, anger. This can happen to all of us so easily when we are caught up in a crowd. It can happen in person, but these days we see it happen so quickly and easily on social media. How often do you hear or see something, get angry, and share it before you even know if it's true? Experts say we live in "The Age of Outrage." We are so polarized and everyone gets outraged so easily that some even say we're addicted to outrage. Social media algorithms and news media headlines are even set up that way, to get us outraged, because they know that will give them more clicks and shares.

**QUESTION** *Choose three different people with whom you would like to share the gospel (or places, like at school, at the grocery store, at the homeless shelter, etc.). How can you become like them and enter their world the way Jesus did with us?*

**QUESTION** *Reflect on your own tendency to be "outraged" quickly at things you hear on the news, see on social media, or see out in the world in person. Why does this happen? What are your triggers? Now reflect on your tendency to share your outrage and let it grow into a mob, either in person or online. Or get caught up in others sharing their outrage. How can we stop ourselves from doing that? How can we stop others from doing that?*

## 2. Paul's Speech to the Jews

### ✚ READ ACTS 22

**QUESTION** *Why did Paul talk about his childhood, training, and past as a persecutor of the church? How might knowing his backstory affect his audience?*

**QUESTION** *What did Jesus tell Paul in the vision when he was praying in the temple? What does this tell us about this crowd?*

As a Roman citizen, Paul could have simply demanded his release and been on his way, with a Roman guard even leading him to safety out of the city. But his goal wasn't his own safety, it was to resolve this issue in the church, this division and misunderstanding of the gospel. His defense wasn't about himself, his own merit or good works, it was about his encounter with Jesus and God's calling on his life, God's mission. The crowd hadn't given him a chance to defend himself; they had just started beating him without

a trial. The safe thing for Paul to do would have been to tell the tribune he was a Roman citizen and get out of there. Instead, he asked to address the crowd, to present his defense. This wasn't really about making his case; he didn't care about his own safety. It was about giving the crowd a chance to hear his testimony and change their minds.

In his defense, Paul spoke to them in Hebrew, which calmed them down. They began to listen because he was speaking their language. He described his upbringing and identity, showing he was just like them—actually, one of the best and brightest among them. A Jew, born in Tarsus (a noble city) but brought up in Jerusalem, educated by Gamaliel, the top rabbi at the time. He emphasized “according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers”; he also had believed in strict observance of the law just like they did. He described himself as zealous for God “as all of you are this day.” He was identifying himself with his audience even though they had just been beating him—I was just like you. What you just did to me—I’ve done the same thing to so many others. He described the way he had persecuted to the death followers of the Way and took pride in that as righteous justice. He understood why they did what they did.

But then he met Jesus. He told them all about the road to Damascus and how Ananias had told him he would be a witness for Jesus to everyone of what he had seen and heard. But then when he came back to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, he fell into a trance and saw Jesus, who told him to get out of Jerusalem quickly because the people there would not accept his testimony about Him. He responded that he thought they would believe him because of his status as the one who had been persecuting the church. But Jesus said He would send Paul far away from them, among the Gentiles.

This is the moment they stopped listening and called for him to be killed, when he mentioned the mission to the Gentiles. Just as Jesus had told Paul, they refused to hear his testimony. It didn't matter that he used to be one of them. The crowd started to get riled up again, shouting and throwing off their cloaks, a symbolic response to hearing blasphemy. They flung dust into the air, a sign of mourning. The tribune ordered him to be brought to the barracks to be interrogated “by flogging,” torturing him until he told them the truth about what was going on, why this crowd was so angry with him.

This is when Paul finally revealed his Roman citizenship. He waited until the very last moment, until he was bound and about to be whipped. This gave him the legal room to maneuver against them, as even binding a Roman citizen was against the law. He didn't make a scene or shout or demand, he simply asked, “Is it lawful ...?” The centurion stopped immediately and went to the tribune. When the tribune asked Paul about his citizenship, we learn that the tribune had bought his Roman citizenship, but Paul was a citizen by birth; he had a higher status. The interrogators left, and the tribune was afraid.

Yet the tribune didn't let him go. He kept him bound until the next day because he wanted to bring him before the Sanhedrin, since it was the Jews who were accusing him. The tribune recognized that the

crowd's issue with Paul was religious, not political, so he brought him to the Sanhedrin. As a Roman citizen, Paul could have demanded release, but he didn't. He wanted to go before them. He wanted to share his testimony.

**QUESTION** *Why did Paul try to identify with the crowd in his speech? What was he trying to accomplish?*

**QUESTION** *What does it tell us about Paul that he didn't demand his release when he could have? What was he trying to accomplish?*

**APPLICATION POINT** / Twice in this story so far Paul could have demanded his release on the basis of his Roman citizenship. But he didn't, because he didn't care about his own safety. His goal wasn't to escape but to share the gospel. Even though he was pretty sure they would reject his message, he wanted to share his testimony with the crowd and then, in the next chapter, speak before the Sanhedrin. Paul was not concerned about his own safety; he just wanted to share the gospel. His whole life was about sharing the gospel. It was his only reason for living. Most of us don't face physical danger for sharing the gospel, but we can still ask ourselves if we have this kind of passion for sharing the gospel. Is it our life's purpose? Is our life centered on sharing the gospel and building God's kingdom?

**QUESTION** *Reflect on your own passion for sharing the gospel. How is your life centered on God's mission? What sacrifices do you make to live on mission for the gospel?*

**QUESTION** *If someone looked at your life from the outside, what would they think your life's mission is? Your purpose and calling? What could they use as evidence for that view?*



### 3. Paul Before the Sanhedrin

#### ✚ READ ACTS 23

**QUESTION** *How did Paul use the Pharisees and Sadducees disunity against themselves?*

**QUESTION** *How many soldiers did the tribune send to protect Paul in getting away from Jerusalem? What does this tell us about the level of danger he believed Paul was in?*

Paul began his defense by saying he had lived his life before God in good conscience up to that day. When he was persecuting Christians, he had a clean conscience about it. He believed he was doing the right thing because he didn't yet know better. Now that he was living on mission for the gospel, he did it with a clear conscience, knowing his calling was from the Lord. By saying this, he was giving them grace. He understood they had beaten him in good conscience; he didn't fault them for it, because they thought they were doing God's will. But they didn't get that. They just heard him say what he was doing now was in good conscience, which they didn't agree with, and they reacted. The high priest ordered him to be struck on the mouth.

Paul responded by calling him a "whitewashed wall," reminiscent of Jesus calling the Pharisees "whitewashed tombs" that looked good on the outside but on the inside were full of dead people's bones (Matthew 23:27). Paul also said God would strike the high priest and pointed out the irony that he was judging Paul according to the law yet was breaking the law by ordering him to be struck without a trial (Deuteronomy 25:1–2). When the crowd challenged him for reviling God's high priest, Paul said he didn't realize he was the high priest. The high priest sat in a special place and wore distinctive robes, so it's unlikely he didn't realize who he was. Even if Paul had some vision impairment, as some scholars have suggested, he knew the person who ordered the striking would have been the high priest. This shows he was speaking sarcastically, implying that a high priest who was truly "God's high priest" wouldn't behave this way. He had already shown how the high priest was breaking the law. If he had been a godly leader who was doing things rightly, Paul would not have reviled him (Exodus 22:28).

At this point, Paul saw that the Sanhedrin contained both Sadducees and Pharisees and deduced that he could incite a disagreement between them and essentially "divide and conquer." The Pharisees and Sadducees were known for disagreeing, especially over the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees believed that at the end times, all would be resurrected and judged, and the righteous would enter the eternal kingdom of heaven. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection; they thought this life was all there is, and when you die, that was it. Paul announced to the Sanhedrin that he was a Pharisee, and

the reason he was on trial was with respect to the hope of the resurrection of the dead. This caused a huge uproar, with the whole council loudly arguing with each other, including some of the Pharisees standing up and saying they saw nothing wrong with this man; they believed his testimony, that an angel or spirit could have spoken to him.

It may have looked like he could have been found innocent, but then the dissension became violent, and the tribune was afraid they would tear Paul to pieces. So, he sent his soldiers to take him away by force back to the barracks. The next night, Jesus appeared to him and told him to “take courage” because he would now go testify about Jesus in Rome just as he had done in Jerusalem. These words remind us of all the times God told His leaders to “be strong and courageous” before battle, always promising He would be with them and give them the strength (Deuteronomy 31:6–8; Joshua 1:9; 1 Chronicles 28:20; et. al.). This vision reminds us that Paul had completed his mission in Jerusalem, to testify about Jesus before the Jews and the Sanhedrin. This is why he didn’t try to escape or demand release though he could have.

The next day, more than forty of the Jews made a plot against Paul, making an oath that they would not eat or drink till they had killed him. They asked the Sanhedrin to ask the tribune to send Paul back to them to continue his trial, and they would kill him along the way. These were the Sicarii, who believed assassinations like this were their calling from God. Ironically, the tribune had thought Paul was the leader of one of these revolts, but instead, he was their target.

But Paul’s nephew heard about their plan, went to the barracks, and told Paul. Paul told the centurion, and he brought Paul’s nephew to the tribune. The tribune helped Paul escape to Felix, the governor in Caesarea, so he could have a real trial. The tribune sent 200 soldiers, a third of his troops, with seventy horsemen and 200 spearmen to escort him to Caesarea. This was a huge escort; he clearly believed Paul was in great danger. They left at 9:00 pm, under the cover of night, both for protection and so they could be back by the next day, not leaving their fortress vulnerable for very long. The soldiers escorted him part of the way and let the horsemen take him the rest of the way so they could get back. The tribune sent a letter with him to Felix explaining the situation, saying he was sending Paul to Felix so his accusers could state their case before him in a real trial. When Felix learned Paul was a Roman citizen from Tarsus in Cilicia, he promised to give Paul a proper hearing when his accusers arrived. He commanded Paul to be guarded until then.

The danger to Paul had escalated even more. The tribune protected him because he was a Roman citizen, but he also saw that the crimes Paul was being accused of were religious ones within the Jewish faith over which he had no jurisdiction. Yet, he would not allow the Sanhedrin to attack Paul or the Sicarii to ambush him. Meanwhile, Paul had allowed himself to suffer this persecution and violence because his mission was to share the gospel with the Jewish crowd and the Sanhedrin. Now, by going through the Roman court, he would also be able to share the gospel with the governor Felix, then Herod Agrippa, king of Israel, and eventually even at the palace in Rome. In Philippians, which he wrote from prison in Rome, Paul

would say he rejoiced in his imprisonment because it gave him the opportunity to share the gospel with the whole palace guard and other people of influence in Rome. And his commitment to share the gospel without fear, even while in chains, had inspired others all over the world to proclaim the gospel without fear (Philippians 1:12–14). Paul had been fulfilling his mission to take the gospel to the Gentiles all over the world for decades. Now his mission had taken him to these places of great influence—the Sanhedrin, governors, kings, emperors—which had greater impact but also greater risk. But Paul was not afraid. This was his sole purpose in life, and dying from it would only be all the better because he would be with Jesus (Philippians 1:21).

**QUESTION** *How did God protect Paul's life through all this danger? How did God orchestrate Paul getting an audience before this group of Jews, the Sanhedrin, and the governor?*

**QUESTION** *What does this tell us about how God will orchestrate things for the mission He has for us?*

**QUESTION** *What does it tell us about trusting God even when faced with danger?*

**APPLICATION POINT** / Someone with less faith may have tried to protect themselves from this danger or tried to escape danger too soon, but Paul trusted that God had a mission for him and would orchestrate things so he could preach the gospel to those God had called him to. He knew it might involve danger to himself, but he was okay with that, because he was solely focused on the mission. This story shows us we can trust that when God calls us to something, He will protect us through it, give us the courage to get through it, and orchestrate things so we can accomplish our mission. That doesn't mean we won't experience any pain. Paul was beaten and imprisoned. But those things were necessary to get him in front of these audiences to preach the gospel. God gave him the strength and courage to persevere and even find joy in it all. Paul had complete faith in Jesus and followed Him wherever He led.

**QUESTION** *What is God calling you to do? What mission has He given you? How has He equipped you for this mission? How is He orchestrating things so you can fulfill it?*

**QUESTION** *How can you trust God even if the mission takes you through dangerous places? How can you know where He is leading you?*

## [NEXT STEPS]

Paul followed Jesus on mission for the gospel no matter the danger to himself. He trusted that God would protect him enough to be able to fulfill his mission, but he might also have to endure danger to fulfill the mission. This week, reflect on your mission from God. How are you participating in the Great Commission given to all believers in your own unique situation, with your own gifting and calling? How can you trust Jesus and follow Him, even through danger and persecution, to fulfill that mission? If you don't already have a clear picture of your unique personal mission from God, pray for His vision to see it.

## [PRAY]

*+Pray for God to reveal your personal mission to you. How He is leading you to fulfill the Great Commission in your own little corner of the world, and/or how may He be calling you to step outside of that comfort zone to fulfill His mission? Be specific in asking Him to show you where He is calling you. Pray for strength and courage to do what He is calling you to do.*

*Pray the following psalm as a prayer for strength and courage to fulfill God's call on your life:*

### **Psalm 31: To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.**

**31** *In you, O Lord, do I take refuge;  
let me never be put to shame;  
in your righteousness deliver me!*

**2** *Incline your ear to me;  
rescue me speedily!*

*Be a rock of refuge for me,  
a strong fortress to save me!*

**3** *For you are my rock and my fortress;  
and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me;*

**4** *you take me out of the net they have hidden for me,  
for you are my refuge.*

**5** *Into your hand I commit my spirit;  
you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.*

**6** *I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols,  
but I trust in the Lord.*

**7** *I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love,  
because you have seen my affliction;  
you have known the distress of my soul,*

**8** *and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;  
you have set my feet in a broad place.*

**9** *Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;  
my eye is wasted from grief;*

my soul and my body also.  
 10 For my life is spent with sorrow,  
 and my years with sighing;  
 my strength fails because of my iniquity,  
 and my bones waste away.  
 11 Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach,  
 especially to my neighbors,  
 and an object of dread to my acquaintances;  
 those who see me in the street flee from me.  
 12 I have been forgotten like one who is dead;  
 I have become like a broken vessel.  
 13 For I hear the whispering of many—  
 terror on every side!—  
 as they scheme together against me,  
 as they plot to take my life.  
 14 But I trust in you, O Lord;  
 I say, "You are my God."  
 15 My times are in your hand;  
 rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!  
 16 Make your face shine on your servant;  
 save me in your steadfast love!  
 17 O Lord, let me not be put to shame,  
 for I call upon you;  
 let the wicked be put to shame;  
 let them go silently to Sheol.  
 18 Let the lying lips be mute,  
 which speak insolently against the righteous  
 in pride and contempt.  
 19 Oh, how abundant is your goodness,  
 which you have stored up for those who fear you  
 and worked for those who take refuge in you,  
 in the sight of the children of mankind!  
 20 In the cover of your presence you hide them  
 from the plots of men;  
 you store them in your shelter  
 from the strife of tongues.  
 21 Blessed be the Lord,  
 for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me  
 when I was in a besieged city.  
 22 I had said in my alarm,  
 "I am cut off from your sight."  
 But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy  
 when I cried to you for help.  
 23 Love the Lord, all you his saints!  
 The Lord preserves the faithful  
 but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.  
 24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage,  
 all you who wait for the Lord!