

## Lesson 10      6 January, 2019

### Paul's Deliverance from the Jews

**Lesson Scope:** Acts 22:22-23:35

*References in brackets refer to Acts 22 & 23 unless otherwise specified*

#### Lesson Focus

Paul was nearing the end of his third missionary journey, and he felt “bound in the spirit” to go to Jerusalem. The brethren along the way warned Paul of the dangers that would come upon him. No doubt, Paul himself felt trepidation for his trip to Jerusalem. However, these warnings did not dissuade him from going to Jerusalem.

Now the warnings that Agabus and other brethren predicted would come to pass in Jerusalem became a reality. Unbelieving Jews from Asia Minor recognized him in the temple and assaulted him, intending to kill him. Roman soldiers ran to his rescue just in time. As the soldiers carried Paul into the castle, he requested that he might speak to the angry crowd.

They listened intently as he gave his personal testimony in Hebrew. When he told how God had sent him to preach unto the Gentiles, the crowd erupted in anger.

God sovereignly superintends the lives of His people. Although the enemies of the cross may seek their harm, God makes “all things work.

Paul faced many tests to his faith. Now at the end of his third missionary journey, it may have seemed that the door of opportunity was closing for him. His zeal to try to witness to his own people resulted in them moving against him with violence and hatred. He was then taken to the castle for safekeeping. All these things could have seemed like closed doors for Paul. However, looking back we can trace God's miraculous moving to spare Paul a beating and even possibly death.

Today God moves in much the same way. When we trust Him for guidance, He can use our feeble efforts to work out His holy will. Man must be willing to move in faith, trusting God for guidance with the knowledge he has in order to experience God's providential care. Paul did not simply sit back and wait to see how God would get him out of this situation.

Enumerate the things within the lesson scope that were seemingly a roadblock for Paul. Then throughout the lesson, see how God used these roadblocks to further His cause. Use this lesson to encourage yourself and others with the goodness of God, even when the path takes some unexpected turns. God is still there, orchestrating events to bring about His holy will for our good.

**Lesson Aim:** To portray principles related to God’s providential care for His people.

**Theme Verse:** **Romans 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

### Lesson Text

#### “Is it Lawful for You to Scourge . . . a Roman?”

**Acts 22:24-30**

<sup>24</sup> (KJV) The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him. <sup>25</sup> And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? <sup>26</sup> When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. <sup>27</sup> Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. <sup>28</sup> And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free* born. <sup>29</sup> Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. <sup>30</sup> On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from *his* bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

#### “There Arose a Great Dissension”

**Acts 23:6**

<sup>6</sup> (KJV) But when Paul perceived that the 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: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

**Acts 23:6**

<sup>6</sup> (KJV) But when Paul perceived that the 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: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

**Acts 23:10-11**

<sup>10</sup> (KJV) And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle. <sup>11</sup> And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

**“Bring Him Safe Unto Felix”**

**Acts 23:12**

<sup>12</sup> (KJV) And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

**Acts 23:16-24**

<sup>16</sup> (KJV) And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. <sup>17</sup> Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him*, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. <sup>18</sup> So he took him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto *him*, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. <sup>19</sup> Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him* aside privately, and asked *him*, What is that thou hast to tell me? <sup>20</sup> And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul tomorrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. <sup>21</sup> But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. <sup>22</sup> So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him*, *See thou* tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me. <sup>23</sup> And he called unto *him* two centurions,

saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; <sup>24</sup> And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor.

**Acts 23:31**

<sup>31(KJV)</sup> Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris.

## Questions for Study

### Lawful for You to Scourge . . . a Roman?”

1. What motivated the chief captain’s actions?
2. How is the government today aiding us in spreading the Gospel?

### “There Arose a Great Dissension”

3. Discuss the wisdom of raising the issue of the resurrection on this occasion.
4. Enumerate the ways the Lord’s voice in the night cheered Paul.
5. How can our hearts receive encouragement when facing difficult times?
6. How can we be sure that we are not running ahead of God or moving outside His will?

### “Bring Him Safe Unto Felix”

7. How did the Jews’ oath figure into God’s providential care?
8. What is man’s responsibility in regard to divine providence?

## Analysing the Passage

“Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?” (22:25).

In the early second century B.C. the Romans passed a law stating that it is illegal to torture or whip a Roman citizen. The chief captain erred by preparing to punish Paul by scourging and failing to give him a fair trial first.

“The chief priests and all their council” (22:30), consisting of approximately seventy men, were the leading Jewish leaders called the Sanhedrin. It was their responsibility to interpret and apply the Jewish law to the affairs of the Jewish nation. They were to try those who violated the law, and at times impose capital punishment.

This Sanhedrin consisted of a mix of Pharisees and Sadducees. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Was Paul wise to bring that issue up (23:10)? Had this trial continued, it would probably have ended with Paul condemned and taken out and stoned. Likely, Paul understood the chances of a fair trial were minimal. The question of Jesus' resurrection was the underlying cause of the Jewish hatred toward him. This statement turned the focus somewhat off himself and placed him between the two groups. God was able to use this action in His divine providence to rescue Paul.

The chief captain feared "lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces" (23:10). Losing a prisoner, especially a Roman without a clearly defined crime, may have meant that the guards would have lost their lives. We do not know the doubts and fears that assailed Paul that night in prison, but "the Lord stood by him" (23:11). The Lord promised to fulfill Paul's desire to preach in Rome.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **"Is It Lawful for You to Scourge . . . a Roman?"**

1. God sees His people and superintends their circumstances (22:24-25).

No situation is out of God's control; the forces of evil are ever limited to what He allows. He foresees every circumstance, overruling with perfect timing to fulfill His purposes. However, man cannot sit back and do nothing, supposing that God will somehow supernaturally take care of the situation.

2. Secular laws may at times provide protection for God's people (22:25).

Today we appreciate the law and order that our government provides. They grant us police protection as we go about our daily duties. We enjoy religious freedom to assemble for worship, to teach the Gospel openly, and to travel in missionary activity. God does not promise these privileges, and Christians in many countries do not have them. Our freedom is our opportunity to build Christ's kingdom.

### **"There Arose a Great Dissension"**

3. God gives boldness to speak His message in times of trial (23:6).

Paul's focus was centred on Christ's kingdom and not on his own interests. Therefore, as he stood before the council, he saw it as another op-

portunity to witness for Christ. The Lord was able to use his zeal and further embolden him through the Holy Spirit's direction. Many of our Anabaptist forefathers courageously defended their faith in the face of certain death. They knew the Scriptures, they knew their Saviour, and they lived with a clear conscience. Their testimony convinced many others of truth.

4. God at times uses government officials to provide for His people (23:10).

God used a Roman castle not only to spare Paul, but also to give him opportunity to preach the kingdom of Christ to kings and officials who probably would never have otherwise heard the Gospel message.

Today, men suffering for doing right use occasions in prison to hold Bible studies and spread God's words to hearts that probably would never have had occasion to be witnessed to.

5. God encourages those who are suffering for His name's sake (23:11). Inside this formidable castle, Paul must have been greatly encouraged to know that the Lord was pleased with his efforts to testify at Jerusalem, even though the Jews responded with hatred and violence. God never forgets His suffering saints. Sometimes He gives encouragement through other people or with a strong sense of His presence. He brings to mind Bible verses that meet our specific need. We find courage by remembering others who have endured suffering faithfully.

6. God gives direction and purpose in times of distress (23:11).

Paul had a strong desire to be able to witness at Rome. Languishing in prison, he may have thought that this was the end. However, God promised that he would yet go to Rome. Paul could cling to this promise later in the midst of a violent tempest when "all hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (27:20). God does not normally appear visibly or speak audibly as He did to Paul, but He does give peace and assurance as we seek and obey Him. He gives us direction according to our need, often through spiritual brethren.

**"Bring Him Safe Unto Felix"**

7. Faithful men willingly hazard themselves to spare their brethren (23:16).

The early Anabaptists would not reveal information that might harm other Christians. Do we guard our brethren's reputations and refuse to participate in gossip? Are we willing to share what we have to help oth-

ers in need? Are we willing to serve on mission fields and leave all our comforts so that another searching soul could be snatched from the fire?  
8. Man's wicked devices are easily overruled by the mighty hand of God (23:22-24, 31).

The sight of the fourth man in the furnace astonished Nebuchadnezzar; the word of Jesus in Gethsemane caused the arresting mob to fall backward; and Peter walked out of a barred and guarded prison.

Today, in spite of circumstances that seem formidable, God is well able make a way for us.

### **Important Teachings**

1. God sees His people and superintends their circumstances (22:24-25).
2. Secular laws may at times provide protection for God's people (22:25).
3. God gives boldness to speak His message in times of trial (23:6).
4. God at times uses government officials to provide for His people (23:10).
5. God encourages those who are suffering for His name's sake (23:11).
6. God gives direction and purpose in times of distress (23:11).
7. Faithful men willingly hazard themselves to spare their brethren (23:16).
8. Man's wicked devices are easily overruled by the mighty hand of God (23:22-24, 31).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. What motivated the chief captain's actions?

God was behind the scenes, prompting and guiding according to His will. The chief captain did not understand the charges against Paul, but when he saw the upheaval, he intended to scourge Paul to wring a confession out of him.

2. How is the government today aiding us in spreading the Gospel?

In most countries the officials are trying to make travel safe; this enables us to spread the Gospel. The officials allow us to witness in busy cities with protection. They grant us religious freedom.

3. Discuss the wisdom of raising the issue of the resurrection on this occasion.

Paul's perception of the group enabled him to move the focus off himself and place it between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The root of the charges brought against Paul was the resurrection of the Lord. He exposed the root of their disagreement. The Lord used this occasion to witness to the Jews one more time. It was through this event that God was able to deliver Paul from the Jews and move him to Rome.

4. Enumerate the ways the Lord's voice in the night cheered Paul.

Paul no doubt was thinking back over the day's events and more than likely was pondering his varied responses. He possibly was bemoaning the fact that his own people who knew the prophecies and had seen them fulfilled, were blindly refusing truth. He probably was thinking that this was the end of the road. However, the Lord came to him and assured him that he was doing the right thing and that the Lord was standing by him. He also promised Paul that his heart's desire to go to Rome would be fulfilled.

5. How can our hearts receive encouragement when facing difficult times?

Today we have God's Word written for us. We need to make sure that we are in God's will by total obedience to His commands. We can receive encouragement by well exercised prayer life. We need to cultivate a close relationship with the Lord now so that when troublesome times come, the Lord can guide us through them. The other resource that can be a great source of encouragement is the brotherhood. Find a spiritual brother or sister that you can share with, who can help you on your pathway.

6. How can we be sure that we are not running ahead of God or moving outside His will?

We need to earnestly beseech God's direction for our lives. Our prayers should be more centred on His direction than for blessings on our plans. We need to surrender our will to His way. We must walk in the truth that we already know and follow the direction that we have already been given. A spiritual brotherhood can also help us find our way.

7. How did the Jews' oath figure into God's providential care?

These Jews were determined to finally get rid of Paul. A young man was placed by God at the right place at the right time to hear of this plot. This young man, likely under dangerous circumstances, allowed himself to be used of God to warn the chief captain of the plot. God

then used this experience to safely move Paul out of Jerusalem. Who would have thought that a man in danger of his life would have over two hundred soldiers to transport him to safety? The Jews meant it for harm, but God turned that harm into good.

8. What is man's responsibility in regard to divine providence?

To experience divine providence, man must be in God's will. "I being in the way the LORD led me" (Genesis 24:27). This verse alludes to the fact that we must be already walking in the pathway that God has outlined in His Word. Man must be willing to continue walking in the light that he already has, and then God will help him. God most times does not just supernaturally get us out of a bad situation. We must be careful to not develop a fatalistic view when things go wrong. Rather, we need to trust God that He knows best and that He is allowing this for our good.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Divine providence is always at work in behalf of God's people. He is personally interested and involved in the details of our lives. He will give us the comfort, guidance, and protection that we need. He will perform His perfect will in our lives as we remain fully surrendered to Him.

### **Research Guide**

1. Make sure that you read the lesson scope as well as the surrounding verses to gain an understanding of the backdrop of events.