

Lesson 10 - 30 September 2012

Paul's Deliverance From the Jews

Lesson Scope: [Acts 22:23-23:35](#)

Lesson Focus

During Paul's return to Jerusalem at the close of his third missionary journey, a number of brethren had warned him of the sufferings that awaited him there. These warnings did not persuade him to change his purpose of going up to Jerusalem and then on to Rome (Acts 19:21).

The bonds and afflictions, which Agabus and others had prophesied would come upon Paul in Jerusalem, had now become reality. Unbelieving Jews from Asia Minor recognized him in the temple and assaulted him, intending to kill him. Roman soldiers ran to the scene and rescued him 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 salvation to the Gentiles, however, they interrupted him with cries of anger.

God sovereignly superintends the lives of His people. Although the enemies of the cross may seek their harm, God makes "all things work together for good to them that love" Him.

Our focus in this uncertain world must be on God, who can and will provide for His people no matter how strongly the forces of evil array themselves. This lesson illustrates God's protection through earthly governments, but God is able to provide even when the authorities oppose His people.

Note that Paul used his rights as a Roman citizen, but he did not demand those rights (Acts 22:25).

Lesson Aim: To see 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:

Delivered From the Crowd

[Acts 22:24-25](#) ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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?

[Acts 22:29-30](#) ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ 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.

Delivered From the Council

[Acts 23:6](#) ⁶ 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](#) ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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.

Delivered From the Conspiracy

[Acts 23:12](#) ¹² 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 ¹⁶ And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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? ²⁰ And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. ²¹ 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. ²² 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. ²³ 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; ²⁴ And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor.

Acts 23:31 ³¹ Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris.

Questions for Study

Delivered From the Crowd

1. What motivated the chief captain's actions?
2. What role has God given to earthly rulers?

Delivered From the Council

3. Discuss the wisdom of raising the issue of the resurrection on this occasion.
4. In what ways did the Lord's voice in the night encourage Paul?

5. How can we know, in the midst of stressful circumstances, that we are in God's will?

Delivered From the Conspiracy

6. What providential elements figured in Paul's deliverance from the Jews under oath?

7. How should we respond to a right understanding of God's providential care for His people?

Analyzing the Passage

A chief captain (Acts 22:24) commanded a thousand soldiers. This force at Jerusalem was often strengthened during Jewish feasts and was likely on highest alert at these times. The Roman force was stationed in the castle Antonia, which was situated on high ground next to the temple.

The chief captain did not know the cause for the disturbance, but it was his responsibility to keep order. A suspect "examined by scourging" would commonly reveal his crimes. Roman law did not allow this torture to be used on an uncondemned Roman; nor was it lawful to bind him.

Since Paul was protected as a Roman citizen, the chief captain called together the Jewish leaders and their council, the Sanhedrin, to inform him of Paul's crime. Paul knew that he would not receive a fair hearing before the Sanhedrin, and he used the disagreement between the two factions to cause a mistrial. The chief captain once again rescued Paul from mob violence.

The vow that bound the "more than forty" (Acts 23:13) Jews was as strong as they could make it. They would fast until they had killed Paul. Upon learning of this plot, the chief captain commanded a very strong force to convey Paul to Antipatris and then on to Caesarea to Felix, the governor of Judea.

Principles and Applications

Delivered From the Crowd

1. God sees His people and superintends their circumstances (Acts 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.

2. God at times uses earthly authorities and laws to provide protection for His people (Acts 22:25; 23:10). He moved the chief captain to deliver Paul from the Jewish mob and from the council. He used the Roman laws to spare Paul from scourging. 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.

Delivered From the Council

3. The Holy Spirit gives boldness to speak His message in times of trial (Acts 23:6). As Paul stood before the council, he could claim Jesus' promise to all His followers on trial for their faith, "Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost" (Mark 13:11). 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 the truth.

4. God gives encouragement to those who are suffering for His Name's sake (Acts 23:11). Paul must have been greatly encouraged to know that the Lord was pleased with his efforts to testify in Jerusalem, even though the Jews had 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.

5. God gives direction and purpose in times of distress (Acts

23:11). God's word to Paul was that he would indeed testify in Rome also. Paul could cling to this promise later in the middle of a violent tempest, when "all hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (Acts 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.

Delivered From the Conspiracy

6. 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 others in need? Are we willing to serve on mission fields where we face special physical and spiritual dangers?

7. Man's wicked devices are easily overruled by the mighty hand of God (Acts 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 to make a way for us.

Important Teachings

1. God sees His people and superintends their circumstances (Acts 22:24-25).
2. God at times uses earthly authorities and laws to provide protection for His people (Acts 22:25; 23:10).
3. The Holy Spirit gives boldness to speak His message in times of trial (Acts 23:6).
4. God gives encouragement to those who are suffering for His Name's sake (Acts 23:11).
5. God gives direction and purpose in times of distress (Acts 23:11).
6. Faithful men willingly hazard themselves to spare their

brethren (Acts 23:16).

7. Man's wicked devices are easily overruled by the mighty hand of God (Acts 23:22-24, 31).

Answers to Questions

1. What motivated the chief captain's actions?

The chief captain apparently took seriously his responsibility to keep peace and to deal with wrongdoers. As a man under higher authority, he was careful to adhere to the standards of Roman law. Behind all this, God was using the chief captain to protect Paul from harm so that he could continue his missionary work.

2. What role has God given to earthly rulers?

God has given authority to earthly rulers for the purpose of maintaining order and punishing evildoers (Romans 13:1-4). No society can prosper without law, order, and a reasonable degree of justice. God calls His people to respect and obey earthly rulers (Romans 13:5-7).

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

It was appropriate for Paul to raise this issue because it represents the heart of the Gospel. Paul obviously knew that his audience would react as they did. God was directing Paul's words to effect his deliverance from the council.

4. In what ways did the Lord's voice in the night encourage Paul?

The Lord's words reassured Paul that He approved his missionary efforts in Jerusalem. The Lord also affirmed that Paul would reach Rome, which would fulfill his fervent desire to evangelize in the capital of the empire.

5. How can we know, in the midst of stressful circumstances, that we are in God's will?

God gives peace, as well as grace according to our need. The brethren also help us discern God's will.

6. What providential elements figured in Paul's deliverance

from the Jews under oath?

Paul's nephew was at the right place at the right time to learn of the plot. God gave him courage to face the intimidation of entering the castle and speaking to the captain. God caused the captain to take the young man's warning seriously and to transport Paul to safety without incident.

7. How should we respond to a right understanding of God's providential care for His people?

Understanding God's providential care should not cause us to act carelessly or presumptuously. We should claim the peace, confidence, and security that God wants us to have despite the uncertainties of the future.

Research Guide

Read the Scriptures listed under "God—Providence Of, Overruling Interpositions Of The" in Nave's Topical Bible.

Summarizing the Lesson.

All the way my Saviour leads me;
What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy,
Who through life has been my Guide?

Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort,
Here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whate'er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well.

All the way my Saviour leads me,
Cheers each winding path I tread,
Gives me grace for ev'ry trial,
Feeds me with the living bread.

Though my weary steps may falter,
And my soul athirst may be,
Gushing from the Rock before me,
Lo! a spring of joy I see.

All the way my Saviour leads me;
Oh, the fullness of His love!
Perfect rest to me is promised
In my Father's house above.

When my spirit, clothed immortal,
Wings its flight to realms of day,
This my song through endless ages:
Jesus led me all the way.
—Fanny J. Crosby