

## ~ Lesson 80 ACTS ~

## Providence from Jerusalem to Rome

Acts 22:23-23:11

As we study the book of Acts we are seeing God work through his people to bring the Gospel from Jerusalem, to Judea, Samaria and then to the ends of the earth, namely the city of Rome, Acts 1:8. And from this point in Acts 22:23, where we left off last week, to the end of the book, Luke describes the providential hand of God as he moves Paul and the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. Today we will be covering the remaining verses in chapter 22 up to 23:11 with an amazing promise from Jesus to Paul. And in this text we will see God's hand protecting and guiding the Apostle Paul to his ultimate destination, the city of Rome.

As we read through these last six chapters of the book of Acts, it is important to keep in mind the purpose of why Luke is writing this book. Of course, the Holy Spirit is giving us the account and formation of the early church and detailing for us the life of Paul. Amazing Truths found in the book of Acts. But in Luke's mind, he is writing this letter as trial documents to Theophilus, a Roman official, for Paul's appeal to Caesar. And in these last six chapters, we see Luke spend much time and detail of all the accounts that led him to stand before Caesar in Rome. The Jewish religion was an accepted and protected religion within the Roman community and Luke is making the argument that Christianity is not some heretical sect that is contrary to Rome, but in fact it is the fulfillment of the Jewish faith and that salvation has come to the world. And as we have seen, Luke always portrays Rome as the "good guys," and the Jews and others that would come against Christians as troublemakers. Proving that Christians are not against Rome, but in fact favorable to keeping the peace within the government.

We pick up in Luke's narrative in Acts 22:23 as he describes the events after Paul's defense to the angry mob. Paul had been giving his testimony to the Jewish mob on the steps leading to the Antonian Fortress. A defense of the Gospel proving that Jesus is alive and He is Lord and He has appointed him to preach the Gospel even to the Gentiles nations. At this word, "Gentiles," the crowd erupts in a frenzy and the commander brings him into the barracks of the Antonian Fortress to keep the people from killing him. This is the second time a riot has broken out this day and the whole time, this commander is trying to figure out why these Jews hate the man so much. First the commander thought Paul was the Egyptian fugitive, but when Paul began speaking Greek, he realized he wasn't this assassin. So then the commander, Claudius Lysias, permits Paul to speak to the angry mob hoping to get some information about who he is, but he then starts to speak Hebrew and the riot breaks out again. Now the commander, being at his wits end, decides to have Paul scourged to find out more. Let's read the next set of verses, [Acts 22:23-26](#).

This χιλιάρχος is about to have a mess on his hands. This whole time he has been trying to figure out who Paul is and why the Jews are in such a tumult over him. Now he finds out Paul is a Roman citizen. This becomes an urgent matter because it was illegal for a Roman citizen to be bound, and even worse to have a Roman citizen scourged without any form of trial. Cicero, a Roman historian who lived from 106-43bc, wrote, "To fetter a Roman citizen is a crime; to scourge him, a scandal; to slay him- patricide (to kill a close relative)." Paul knew this and it is interesting that he waits until right before he is to be scourged that he reveals this info. He probably waited because if the commander would have know, there is no way he would have permitted Paul to speak to the angry mob. It is interesting to note how different this commander begins to act toward Paul once he finds out Paul is a Roman.

Lysias, the commander had gone back to his quarters, waiting for Paul to be brought to him bloody and beaten. Maybe then Paul would start talking and he would learn who this man really was. But things go from bad to worse for this commander when he gets the news they were about to scourge a Roman citizen. I think it is so funny how Paul reveals this to the centurion. In what seems to be a very casual manner, Paul says... excuse me, I just have one question, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" Acts 22:25. When the centurion hears this, he tells the commander, then Lysias runs down immediately to Paul and begins asking him questions about his citizenship, [Acts 22:27-29](#).

There were three ways to become a Roman citizen: 1) result of a great service to Rome; usually through the military or some aid in war; 2) pay for it with a large sum of money as Lysias did; 3) be born from Roman parents as Paul was. This natural born citizenship outranked the other two. After Lysias learns of this, notice his demeanor and actions toward Paul completely change. Instead of treating Paul as a prisoner, he protects him as a Roman citizen. So still trying to determine the cause of this riot and the hatred of the Jews toward Paul, he sets up a meeting between the Sanhedrin, Paul and himself, **Acts 22:30**.

Paul is no longer a bound prisoner, but rather someone who is in protective custody awaiting a trial. This meeting was not an official trial. It was an informal meeting held in the Antonian Fortress and not in the meeting hall of the Sanhedrin Council. Paul comes down from the barracks, having been loosed of his chains, and stands before them. The guards even seem to be away in the room above, but on call, Acts 23:10. This now brings us to chapter 23 as Paul makes another speech to the Jews.

**23:1)** Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.”

- His good conscience is probably referring to his conduct in the temple since he had arrived, **Acts 24:12-13, 16**, and not his conduct as a Christian. However, the latter could be true as well.

**23:2-5)** <sup>2</sup> And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. <sup>3</sup> Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?” <sup>4</sup> And those who stood by said, “Do you revile God’s high priest?” <sup>5</sup> Then Paul said, “I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’”

- The tenacious character of the Apostle Paul calling them hypocrites. You whitewashed wall! Matt 23:27. Neither Paul or Jesus tolerated their hypocrisy, although Jesus handled it better, obviously.
- Josephus describes Ananias as being a corrupt high priest who stole the tithes for himself, *Josephus Ant 20.9.2*.
  - He was appointed by Herod Agrippa II
  - The Jews regarded him a traitor and a puppet for Rome. Josephus tells us he eventually was killed by Jewish zealots, *Josephus Wars 2.17.9*
  - He was known for his violent and cruel character.
    - We see this displayed with his actions toward Paul
- Paul, after finding out he is speaking to the high priest, he recognizes his error and confesses publicly
  - even quotes Scripture, Ex 22:28 LXX.
  - In Romans he wrote about respecting those in authority, Romans 13:1
- How did Paul not know Ananias was the high priest?
  - He hadn’t been in the temple in front of the Sanhedrin for eight years.
  - This was an informal meeting and he wasn’t wearing is priestly garb.
  - This office had changed at least 3 times since 50ad, the last time Paul may have seen the high priest.

This may have prompted an outrage within this meeting because notice the state of things in verse 6...

**23:6)** 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!”

- Paul had to cry out to be heard. This shows there were already heated discussions going on in this meeting.

- Because of this, Paul makes a provoking statement that pierces the heart of the council.
  - The resurrection of the dead. I don't believe he was saying this to cause dissention or a riot.
    - Many commentators believe Paul was just trying to end this meeting, but I disagree.
  - Paul is preaching the Gospel, and the heart of our faith is the Resurrection, **1 Cor 15:12-17**.
  - He begins by claiming himself to be a descendant of a Pharisee.
    - His father must have been a Pharisee and he was raised at the feet of Gamaliel who was also a respected Pharisee.
    - Paul is doing this to prove he believes the Law and the Prophets just as the Pharisees did and he is merely proclaiming what the Scriptures teach, **Acts 24:14-15**.
  - Paul, knowing the room is divided between Pharisees and Sadducees which either party believes Jesus rose from the dead, so he cuts right to the heart of the Gospel, the Resurrection.
    - His testimony the day before proved he saw the Resurrected Jesus and the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, but the Sadducees did not.

**23:7-8)** <sup>7</sup> And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. <sup>8</sup> For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.

- The hope of the resurrection of the dead is the basis of our Christian faith.
- The Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection, nor angels nor spirits...
  - that's why they are Sad... you see
- But the Pharisees who were more conservative, they believed the Scriptures and believed in the Resurrection.
- The hope of the Resurrection was a core belief of the Jewish faith because it was prophesied and described in the Old Testament, Abraham and Isaac, Heb 11:19; David's prophecies of the Messiah, Ps 16:10-11; Daniel 12:1-2; Ezekiel 37:1-14; and even Martha knew of the Resurrection to come, John 11:24.
  - There is record of many Pharisees coming to Christian faith, but not one instance of a Sadducee believing.
  - Notice how the Pharisees take Paul's side in the meeting...

**23:9)** Then 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."

- This was a very similar stance that Gamaliel took when he heard the Truth. It is very possible that some Pharisees became Christians from this meeting.
- The Sadducees were more liberal minded and didn't take the Scriptures seriously
  - The high priest Ananias is said to have been a Sadducee.

**23:10)** Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks.

- The commander, knowing that Paul is a Roman and in his custody, fearing that he might be murdered, saves his life again from this riot and brings him back into the barracks.
- And that night while Paul is in his cell, Jesus visits him

**23:11) But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.”**

- I believe this could have been another physical appearance of Jesus, not just a vision.
  - Other times, Luke describes as being in a vision or a trance. This time Luke says Jesus stood by him, ἐφίστημι, to stand upon. This time Jesus isn't presented in His glorious light. More like when He appeared to the Apostles in the 40 days before His ascension.
- Jesus appears to strengthen Paul and encourage him for what is to come. Jesus tells him to take courage, Θάρσει, for he indeed must go to Rome.
  - This is Paul's next step of faith... go to Rome. He was bound to go to Jerusalem. Now to Rome. And it is this word that Paul holds onto for the next two years as he is in prison waiting to go testify in Rome.
- This is exactly how the book of Acts ends... with his testimony to the Jews in Rome, **Acts 28:16-20**
  - For the next six chapters Luke will detail God's providential hand to bring him to Rome to be His witness.