



ACCM

Bible Study: Thursday, March 09 2017.

Topic: Acts 22 and 23

INTRODUCTION: In Response to the uproar that began in Chapter 21, Paul was allowed to speak. In defense of himself, he talked about the situation that led to his conversion. He mentioned his trip to Damascus and his eventual encounter with the Lord and Ananias. He was very careful to let them know about his encounter with the Lord and His instructions to him. He said upon his return to Jerusalem, while he was praying, the Lord told him to leave Jerusalem as he will not be accepted in Jerusalem. That came as a shock to him especially as he felt these people know and recognize his past as a persecutor of the church. As a result, his present state should be taken seriously as facts. When it became obvious that they will not listen to him or accept his position, the Lord sent him to the Gentiles. The statement that he was sent to the Gentiles appears to have angered the Jews and they decided to throw up dust and remove their clothes probably in preparations to stone him.

The Commander again delivered him and in a bid to hear what offense Paul has committed, decided to bind him and lash him. As soon as he was bound, Paul told the officer standing by him that he should not be whipped before they hear him out because he was a Roman citizen. Upon confirmation by the commander, he was frightened and same with the other soldiers and as such they quickly released him. The commander was still curious to find out what the accusations against Paul was that has generated so much anger and hatred. He therefore called for the Jewish leaders the next day to continue the trial. During this trial, the High priest ordered that Paul be slapped because he said he has lived before God with all good conscience. In annoyance Paul spoke harshly to the Priest but later apologised when he was told that he was speaking to the high priest. Paul realised that he was not going to make any headway trying to witness to Jews as he has already

done that by his previous speech. He therefore adopted another approach to set himself free. To achieve this, he caused division amongst the people by saying that he is being tried because he is a Pharisee who believes in the resurrection. This immediately put the people apart as the Sadducees will not agree with the Pharisees and in this argument, since Paul has said he was a Pharisee, the Pharisees began to defend him. Again, to put a stop to the ensuing uproar, Paul was taken from amongst them at the commander's request. The Lord encouraged Paul that night that he will also testify of him in Rome.

By the next morning, Paul's Nephew heard a group of Jews binding themselves with an oath that they will kill Paul. They had made plans to ask the high priest to get him out and then they will kill him. When this was told to Paul, he instructed his nephew to tell it to the commander. When the commander heard this he immediately made plans to send Paul that night to Governor Felix in Caesarea. With a note detailing what the issue is, He provided about 470 soldiers to ensure that nothing happened to Paul on this trip. He made it clear to the governor that he has told the accusers to come to Felix. Felix chose to hear this case himself although it would have been most ideal for the case to be heard in Tarsus where Paul was born.

CHAPTER 22

"Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now." ²And 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. ⁴I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, ⁵as 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.

⁶"Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. ⁷And I fell to the

ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' ⁸So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

⁹"And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid,^[a] but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. ¹⁰So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' ¹¹And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

¹²"Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt *there*, ¹³came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. ¹⁴Then 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. ¹⁵For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

¹⁷"Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance ¹⁸and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' ¹⁹So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. ²⁰And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death,^[b] and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' ²¹Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'"

When Paul returned to Jerusalem the first time, he felt it was going to be very easy to explain to the people what he has seen on his way to Damascus but God told him that they will not receive his testimony.

Have you ever felt surprised and overwhelmed when people just will not understand something you think is obvious? II Cor 4:3-4, I Cor 1:18-19

Paul's Roman Citizenship

²²And 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!" ²³ Then, as they cried out and tore off *their* clothes and threw dust into the air,

At this point, the next thing the Jews would have done was stone and kill Paul as they were already removing their robes.

What could have gotten the Jews so upset in the speech of Paul and why? Rom 8:5-8, I Cor 2:14, I Cor 1:18.

²⁴the 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.

What made the commander think that Paul must have really committed a crime and that by binding and whipping him, he will confess? Do we sometimes find ourselves in this situation? A situation where you are very innocent and the behaviour and attitude of the people who are against you makes it look like you are guilty?

Think of what happens when people wrongfully accuse you because of your belief. Matthew 5:10-11, James 1:2-5

²⁵And 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?"

²⁶When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman."

²⁷Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes."

²⁸The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a *citizen*."

²⁹Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

In this situation, Paul was using his position to his advantage. He could have kept quiet and believed that he was suffering for the kingdom sake. Use your position to your advantage whenever you find the opportunity. I Cor 14:20, Matthew 10:16.

A simple declaration of his citizenship freed him from scourging and oppression. Have we been able to tell and prove to the devil who we are by acknowledging our citizenship. By the Roman law, if you lie about your roman citizenship, the result is death. So, what citizen are you?

Eph 2:19, Phil 3:20. Do you know your rights physically and spiritually?

There is time for everything. It was time for Paul to show his right. Use your right when you have the opportunity.

The Sanhedrin Divided

³⁰The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from *his* bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

The arguments of some people could leave you confused. The commander was so confused as he could not tell the reason for what was going on. He then decided to summon the chief priest again and brought Paul before them. This was perhaps so that he will have the opportunity of hearing what was causing so much outrage.

Chapter 23

Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."² And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. ³ 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?"

⁴And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

The people were more interested in what Paul said about the high priest than the injustice demonstrated by the high priest. John 16:2, Rom 10:2-3.

⁵Then 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.'"^[a]

⁶But 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!"

At this point it appears Paul realised that it was a useless effort trying to make these people see and understand the gospel. He then chose to play a smart one on the people as after all he knew these people very well. He therefore employed a divisive strategic. Sometimes we need to do this to our enemies to put confusion in their midst.

Was he wrong or telling lies with his comment? There is a difference between diplomacy or smartness and telling outright lies. Matthew 5:37. Some Christians may tell lies to prove a point. That is wrong.

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."^[b]

¹⁰Now 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.

Why did the Pharisees suddenly change their mind? Jer 17:9, James 2:1.

The Plot Against Paul

¹¹But 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.". This encouraging word of the Lord to Paul here confirms

why Paul insisted on coming to Jerusalem (To Testify of Him) and that has been achieved. Your testimony does not need to necessarily change people on the spot. The bible says that night the Lord spoke to Paul. We do not know whether he was praying or sleeping. Note how revelations come. Could this be through a dream or a vision. Fear should not be a reason why we cannot bear witness of God. I Peter 4:12-14

¹²And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. ¹³Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. ¹⁴They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow,^[c] as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near."

Did these people not think that they were pleasing God? Paul also felt the same way when he was consenting to the death of Stephen. How then could you be very sure that your conviction about an issue is right? How many times have you felt so sure that your conviction was correct awhile others are wrong? John 16:2

¹⁶So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷Then Paul called one of the centurions to *him* and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him." ¹⁸So he took him and brought *him* to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to *him* and asked *me* to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you."

¹⁹Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside, and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?"

²⁰And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. ²¹But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat

nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you.”

The way and manner that God will intervene in our issues is only known to Him. As for the men that took that oath, they never knew that they were fighting God Himself. Aren't these men going to die of hunger at this rate? And as per the oath they signed, if they could not get Paul killed, they had to be killed. God says to Paul that he must testify of him in Rome and ordinary men have decided that they will not eat until they kill Paul. In the same way, any enemy of ours that have held himself under oath will end up dying because our God has vowed to keep and protect us. See how God protected Paul from these people. He made the commander to provide 470 soldiers to protect Paul on his way. Isaiah 54:14-15, Duet 20:4

The oath the people took was the oath of a curse in other words what they said to themselves is let us be under a curse of we do not kill Paul.

The word used here is anathematizo, an-ath-em-at-id'-zo. That is to declare or vow under penalty of execration:-(bind under a) curse, bind with an oath.

With the fortification that the commander gave to Paul, if these forty people had gone ahead to ensure that they kept their vows, they would have all been dead.

How did Pauls' sister's son hear this plot? Psalm 121:2-4

²²So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded *him*, "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me."

Sent to Felix

²³And he called for two centurions, saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; ²⁴and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring *him* safely to Felix the governor." ²⁵He wrote a letter in the following manner:

²⁶Claudius Lysias,

To the most excellent governor Felix:

Greetings.

²⁷This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. ²⁸And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. ²⁹I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains. ³⁰And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him.

Farewell.

The issue was so serious that the commander sent Paul to Antipatris at night. It appears the journey started at about 9:.00. Did you notice how he sought favor in this letter? He was kind of saying I rescued him when I found that he was a Roman, but he did not say he bound him and was prepared to flog him at some point.

³¹Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought *him* by night to Antipatris. ³²The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks. ³³When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. ³⁴And when the governor had read *it*, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that *he was* from Cilicia, ³⁵he said, "I will hear you when your accusers also have come." And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.