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2 N. July 29, 84 A.M. ✓ ✓ ✓

THE PRISONER TRANSFERRED TO CAESAREA

Acts 23

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus gave his Apostles in the Great Commission a command, and a promise. Jesus does give rewards for faithfulness. He said, lo, I am with you always - even unto the end of the world. Many times Jesus came to Paul and said, don't be afraid. I am with you. This is the greatest consolation that a servant of the Lord can have. To feel that Christ is walking by his side.

David Livingstone came home from 16 years on furlough - the University of Glasgow bestowed upon him a degree as Doctor of Law. He stood on the platform, his faced tanned from sun, one arm hung by his side - an arm made helpless by a lion's attack. He said, I lived in exile among strangers, whose language I did not understand. My life was often in great danger. Shall I tell you what sustained and comforted me. It was this promise "lo, I am with you always."

Paul went to the Temple to worship & now he is a prisoner -

The man we are talking about tonight was in prison. He was dejected, disappointed, and he had come up to Jerusalem bearing gifts. He had presented these gifts to his kinsmen and he had been able to win some of those that he loved. But some of those kinsmen according to the flesh, he failed. He failed here at Jerusalem. He did not leave any great revival movement or awakening in Jerusalem. But upon his heart he wanted to go to Rome. However, it looked as though he were hemmed in and defeated. And he was suffering from dejection, despair, and doubt. I think this was one of the darkest periods in Paul's history. We have discovered that he came to Jerusalem - Chapter 21. And there were people at Caesarea, along the way. Who warned him about going. And once

he arrived, we discover that they took him as a prisoner. And then Chapter 22, Newman had an accident, she crossed the game machine - back Rd lit scars - & front
ford of long - & Paul lost control - gold Police

Paul almost died. He said to himself "I can't remember whether I was going or coming!"
He became confused, "Bless my soul", He said to himself "I can't remember whether I was going or coming!"

Things settle & Paul is in another round of trouble.
he is a prisoner, but he delivers a sermon on the castle steps. He tells about his conversion, his commission to do the will of God, and then the condemnation by the crowd follows - and Paul almost loses his life. And he is taken inside the old prison and is there in chains. This is the point of our beginning this evening with Chapter 23. The entire chapter, perhaps, points up to the prisoner being transferred to Caesarea. For our consideration and concern of understanding these Scriptures - I have divided it up into four different segments. First, Defending Conscience - V. 1-10. Second, Divine Cheer - V. 11. Third, The Devil's Conspiracy - V. 12-15. Fourth, Deliverance to Caesarea - V. 16-35.

I. DEFENDING CONSCIENCE - V. 1-10

Now we will discover that in these verses, here is a very determined council and a very displined conscience, and a very defiant disbelief.

First a determined council - V. 1. Paul appears before the council, the Sanhedrin. And this council is determined that they are going to condemn him and convict him. Following that speech on the castle steps, Paul came before the Sanhedrin. That was composed of 71 members. They were required to be above 30 years of age, to have a good reputation, and be well versed in Jewish law. These men were zealous for the law. They gathered in dignity with their robes on.

The Romans were not great people for law. And the Roman captain brought Paul in, in order to find out the charges.

Paul earnestly looked upon the council. There was no resentment or hatred in his look. He was serious, and he was sincere. But from the very beginning, this

council was determined to convict Paul.

Second, the discipline of conscience. V. 1 - Paul says I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. He was speaking of course of the time after his conversion. You will note that he says, before God. (Not man). Men did not always agree with his work and what he said. He was living to suit, not a group of men or a nation, or any earthly power - only God. He had lived as God's citizen. As a member of God's commonwealth in all good conscience.

Now this claim seems to lack tack - but for brevity sake, Paul sums up his whole speech in it. He may have said much more than Luke has reported here. And it may appear that he is contradicting his confession as the chief of sinners. You remember that he said that. I Tim. 1:13. But one's interpretation here of good conscience, the word literally is joint knowledge. (To know together). It simply means consciousness of one's own thoughts. Heb. 10:2.

Consciousness of (one's own self) Distinction between right and wrong. Rom. 2:15. With approval and disapproval.

Conscience is not an infallible guide. According to I. Cor. 8:7. Conscience can be contaminated. Heb. 10:22.

Paul means to say to this Sanhedrin - to this council that he persecuted Christians. As a conscientious person, a conscientious Jew, though he was mistaken. He was a Pharisee. As he followed his conscience, he turned from Judiasm to Christianity. The point is, against the charge, that he opposed the law and the people in the temple - he says, I've been a good citizen in God's commonwealth. He had the consolation of a good conscience. I Peter 3:16.

Food has depended on me - vital part of the church - we are members of his Body -

1.2
 Third, defiant disbelief. We read that Ananias was displeased with what Paul had said. And the high priest commanded that one smite him on the mouth. An unexpected blow. The high priest did not think Paul was good enough to speak about God, so they told them to smite Paul. Thinking that this would prevent him from speaking about God.

History of Josephus: Ananias sent as prisoner to Rome in chains, tried before Claudius Caesar in the trial acquitted, returned to office, later murdered with dagger.

Ananias was a bad customer. He was cruel and he had a bad character. But this is the treatment of Jesus. John 18:22. It was very offensive - smiting one on the cheek and the mouth. You remember, Jesus said, turn the other cheek in Luke 6:29. What Paul had done, Paul had put himself on a level - an equal footing with the court. And this determined council did not like his disciplined conscience. And we will find that they are very defiant.

V. (3) - Paul calls the man a whited wall. He says, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall. For sittest thou to judge me after the law. And you have commanded me to be here abused - contrary to the law. You are a ruler, and you are commanded this punishment - contrary to the law.

But what Paul was saying, you can take a dirty rotten wall and paint it white, and it will still be dirty and rotten underneath. Paul knew that this priest was like that. He wore his robe but beneath that robe, were his corrupt heart.

They tell us that here is the word used here for dust or lime. Matt. 23:27. The same one is used for white sepulchers. It is a unique way of calling Ananias a hypocrite. It was true. But it was not tactful for other prisoners to do this. Paul had hurled back a word at him in strong emphasis. They would white wash the graves in order that people might not touch them. And be unclean. Here was a notorious glutton and thief and robber - trying to handle things and sitting there. And Paul was saying, I never knew a man like that, could be a high priest

V4-5
Quot 3 Exo. 22 - Not speak evil g-6 Leader -

Then Paul said, "I wish not brethren, that he was a high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak. Paul says, I am sorry - I did not know that you were a high priest. That took a great spirit for Paul to say this. How can you explain this scene as Paul meets here with Ananias - and these priests fully attired. Paul was no stranger of course to the Sanhedrin, in his younger days. He recognized the high priest. Was it because Paul had poor eyesight. Or was it just irony. Paul says, you didn't talk like a high priest. How did I know you were. Many people have given all sorts of answers - even that this was an informal session. And Paul did not know that the high priest was present. Some said that it was Paul's lack of acquaintance with a person. Some said that Paul couldn't suppose that he says a man of his caliber would command somebody to smite him. Others have thought it was because of his near sightedness. But Paul was not able to see when he came in the room and he did not recognize this man as being the high priest. But it took a great spirit for Paul to say, well, I was not brethren about this.

V 6 - We discover that the matter of defiant disbelief leads to discord. Paul perceived that part of them were Sadducees and the other part Pharisees and the council. So he begins New strategy. Here was the Sanhedrin composed of two groups of people. They had something in common - but they were different in other things. Now the Pharisees lay great stress on the externals and religion. And they withdrew from the common herd of people. They believe in immortality, oral law, resurrection, angels, and spirits. The Sadducees are materialists. Against the idea of angels, immortality, or resurrection. They believed in none of them.

Paul decided to divide the council - so he threw in a bombshell. He starts off by saying, I am a Pharisee - V. 6. I am the son of a Pharisee. Of the hope and the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question. I have preached the resurrection of the dead.

Begin pulling hair - tearing off
✓, 4 - tells, why they were fighting -

was going on.

That is just about the way you sum up some congregations today. Isn't it a pity and a shame that churches tear themselves apart over this or that, or the other. When in good common sense, we ought to be able to sit down and work out their problems.

Was Paul on trial because of his hope of the resurrection. Ultimately, this must have been true. Because of his obedience to Jesus Christ. Now Paul did not reject the idea of the resurrection, but he looked forward to his own resurrection because of what Jesus had done for him and in him. When he wrote his letters to the Thessalonians - the great 15th chapter of I Cor. He told his audiences that he expected to take part in the resurrection. And this ought to be a lesson for every church. The Sanhedrin had come together, as a determined council to convict Paul. That was their purpose. And now they had forgotten their purpose - they were spending their time hurting each other.

Listen, the church is set for one purpose. To make Jesus Christ known and to win them for him. As long as we stay on the main line, we will have the blessings of God upon us. But you let some trivial issue come in, and you let someone start a campaign of criticism, and faultfinding - and the people will forget the main purpose. And the church of Christ will suffer.

II. DIVINE CHEER - V. 11

The Sanhedrin had split, there were descending groups. This council was determined to convict Paul. But the cause of his discipline and conscience in which

he revealed his beliefs in the resurrection, there was a turmoil of defiant disbelief and discord registered by the group. What will take place and what will happen next.

First, this was a deep darkness. It was awful darkness for Paul. Perhaps this was one of the darkest nights in the history of Paul's life. Here he was, put back in prison. He was pulled from that angry group. He had come to Jerusalem bringing gifts and now he is in jail - shut out from his fellow Christians. He could not preach. I imagine he was feeling mighty low. This was a dark night for him. And it was deep darkness.

Second (defense decided) - V. 11. And the night following, the Lord stood by him. God wanted him to cheer up. The Lord stood by him. He had been in tough spots before - here at Jerusalem. He had failed. And was now in doubt about the future. And the Lord appeared - and Paul heard him. And Paul knew it. He spoke.

We need to mark the fact - the Lord stood by him. Think of all the wonderful journeys he had had. The bruises he had received. The darkest and most trying days he had. He had been well near death at Lystra. Rejected. But the Lord stood by him. And here he is again. The mystery of God's divine presence. Paul was disappointed. But here was a word - be of good cheer. He had testified of Jesus at Jerusalem. And Jesus wanted to give him a word about the future. Therefore, he told him - he not only testified here. But you must bear witness also at Rome. What a night it was - how full of light - how full of glory. His Master's word of cheer. It was like a benediction - the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. He is ever present with us in the hours of darkness. And to let us know that he is near. You think of the dark nights and the dark experiences

identical comfort - 11:23 & 27 The Lord stood by me!

in your own life. Can you not hear the words - be of good cheer. The voices,

that sounded in Paul's ear that night. His defense was decided. Divine cheer

Abraham - Mt Moriah raised knife - Ram for sacrifice - was going to be his.
Psa 37: 25 I have been young & now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.
"God stands with in youth - man, heart ache - young David, Holofer - Name of God - stone -"

2. Th 11 "Adult world - How can I not hide his face from my troubles see say?
you and I are in the work. There are those that seek to hinder the work,
Watching - Caring - Overruling - guiding - boxing - Never forsaken -
call you by name, and life about you. I can see Paul now - Jesus said you have

preached the truth - even in the view of failure. The voice of the Lord said

3. God comes for us in old age & death - your preacher praying for old men be
well - No! My wife is gone, my children, friends - I'm sick & old My savior
is on other side - pray God will set me free!
When the storms of life are raging stand by me,
The world is tossing me like a ship upon the sea
"Thou who rulest with water, stand by me."
He felt this deep assurance, in this dark hour of need. You have been faithful

at Jerusalem - I have a larger task at Rome.

When I'm growing old & full stand by me,
"my eyes grow dim in death & I draw my latest breath
"Thou God of all the ages, stand by me,"

Can't you be faithful - even with the little place where you serve in your church. It may be small, but remember, God may have something bigger somewhere else. You witness for Christ - if you do not witness for Christ, I can predict one thing. You are going to dry up, you are going to lose your zest, lose your fragrance.

III. DEVIL'S CONSPIRACY - V. 12-15.

First, (determined by oath) - V. (12.) A band of Jews were bound together under a curse - an oath, a vow. We will neither eat nor drink until we have killed Paul.

This was a plot to take Paul's life. Neither eat nor drink. That is, they were devoting themselves to God until they should kill.

This was like King Saul who went after David, I Sam. 14:24.

Now this was a dangerous thing to do. I might pause to say that it is always unwise to make such foolish bargains. They planned to put this man to death - eliminate Paul. That was the first thing they were going to do. Legitimate or not. They thought that murder was justified.

Second, (designated by number) - V. 13. There were more than forty which made this conspiracy. They were swearing together - 40 men. Planning, pledging.

Third, (debased through malignancy) - V. 14. They were willing to kill the priest and the elders - and this will show you how far evil will go against God. They were going to use the religious leaders and the religious leaders were delighted in it. This was a debased malignancy. They wanted to see Paul put out of the way - they knew it was wrong to murder anyone. But they were willing - these 40 men, to use all means that they possibly could to defeat him.

Fourth, (degraded by deprivity) - V. 15. They worked the plan and the scheme. And they said now to the members of the council, you get the chief captain to bring Paul down tomorrow and make out like you are going to inquire a little further in this matter. And we, when he comes near, will be ready to kill him. ASSASSINATE him. They were to ask for a fresh hearing. And we are ready to slay him. All that you have to do is to put up fake meeting.

When he is brought out to the council, we will rush on him and kill him.

Psalm 37 - The wicked plotteth against the just. The Lord shall laugh at him. God, in Heaven laughing at these wicked men.

The Devil's conspiracy - determined by oath, designated by number, debased through malignancy, degraded by depravity....to kill Paul. This sounds very much like Amin and his program in Uganda. In that nation we are told that he has already ^{ASSASSINATED} ~~murdered~~ thousands of people - 3,000 in one section were murdered because they were Christians. A week ago he murdered an arch-bishop. This past week he was going to gather together several hundred Americans. And he had plans, I am sure, to do some head chopping. But he has during this time, murdered his wife. Her limbs dismembered and sewed on backwards. He has gone through all kinds of cruelties - he had one man, his head severed from his body. And placed on a table and talked to it. And then put it in the ice box. You talk about gruesome. But he has a conspiracy on. And all those that would oppose him or think differently - death is the only answer that he can think about.

IV. DELIVERANCE TO CAESAREA - V. 16-35.

First, (defeat of the plot.) V. 16. When Paul's sisters son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle and told Paul. God never sleeps. Paul's nephew hears about the plan, rushes to the castle and tells Paul. The boy was entrusted to keep quiet after telling Paul. This boy may have been a student there in Jerusalem, studying. Anyhow, he knows what to do. He has enough of an address to get into the barracks where Paul was stationed, at the risk of his life.

Now this story (here would really make a T. V. thriller, wouldn't it. It would put some of the stuff you see today on T. V. in the shade.

This boy, outside on the street, heard of the plot. And God put it in his heart to go and tell Paul. Now that is supernatural. The instrument of Paul's safety, was the son of that sister. He had gotten the rumor, and the unseen Lord took hold of the youth. Which is a common place thing. And he found an entrance in the prison. And here told the conspiracy to his uncle.

Paul was very unusual in his response. Paul called for one of the centurions and said - now bring this young man to one of the chief captains - for he has a story to tell him.

V. 18 - So the Centurion took him to the chief captain. And the Centurion said, now I have delivered the boy to you. He has a story to tell you.

V. 19 - Then the chief captain took him by the hand into a private area. That is, what is that that thou has to tell me.

V. 20 - The boy tells the Jews have agreed that they are going to put Paul to death. They have an ambush planned, and they are going to get a council called, and if everything goes perfectly.

V. 21 - They are going to lie and wait - 40 men. They have taken an oath. They are not going to eat or drink until they have killed Paul.

V. 22 - The chief captain sent the young boy away and charged him - tell no man that thou hast showed unto me.

Second Detail of Soldiers - V. 23

The captain calls two Centurions - Make ready. 200 hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea. Horsemen, 3 score and ten. And spearmen 200. At the third hour of the night. Be ready, he says, we are moving tonight at 9 o'clock. The detail of soldiers - taking part in the deliverance.

V. 24 - He also ordered that beasts be provided for Paul and his baggage. And bring them safe unto Felix the governor. Did ever a preacher have such an escort. 470 Roman soldiers, armed - and the preacher on a horse in the midst. Of that force.

Preachers do need protection. They need protection today. But you know the kind of protection they need - they need to be surrounded by the prayers of the people. The members. And I just love members of our church who say [^] I pray for you daily. After all, I feel that this is one of our greatest needs. To pray for each other.

Third Dispatch of a Letter - V. 25

We find that a letter is sent to say - I have taken care of a good Roman citizen.

V. 26 - Greetings from the chief captain Lysias, to Felix.

V. 27 - He told of the plot of the Jews to kill him. And he had rescued him.
He was a Roman.

V. 28 - The council had accused him.

V. 29 - I listened to the questions they had - but they had nothing that was worthy of death. The charges was not convincing evidence.

V. 30 - In view of the plot, I have transferred the whole matter to you - to hear the case. Farewell. Now this letter was delivered to Felix.

V. 31 - The soldiers took the letter, and left at 9 o'clock for Caesarea. This was a 60 mile journey from Jerusalem. But they stopped that night at Antipatris. Which was about 25 miles from Caesarea.

V. 32 - The next day, the foot soldiers returned to the castle in Jerusalem. They felt that they had gone through the country that was dangerous for ambush. And now the rest of the way would be through the rich plains - the fields of wheat and barley that were just ready for the harvest. And there, they would come up to the sea. So it was no longer necessary for the foot soldiers. And they returned to Jerusalem.

V. 33 - Perhaps late that afternoon, the weary soldiers with their remaining horses, entered the streets of Caesarea. The Centurion was still in command.

At once he went up to the governor's palace and gave up his prisoner. And at the same time, to present the dispatch - the letter. With which he was charged. And this was by a command and the authority of Jerusalem.

There is no record that Felix made a personal appearance at this time.

V. 34 - When the governor had read the letter, he asked one question - he asked about the address of the prisoner. And it was given to him Cilicia.

V. 35 - Detained in Herod's prison. Felix said I will give you a fair hearing when your accusers have arrived. In the meantime, you will be kept in Herod's prison.

What would Paul's friends in Caesarea say now? For example, Phillip and his daughters. Think of the prophecy of Agabus. Which has now so quickly come true.

Another thing that Paul might have considered was the Roman governor Felix. He was five years the governor in Judea. And he had two more years to go at this time before he was dismissed from his post. He had begun life as a slave. And he was the favorite of Nero. Felix had risen to be a free man. And the first slave in history to ever become the governor of a Roman province. They say, the historians, "he exercised the rights of a king with the spirit of a slave." He had actually been married to 3 princesses. One after another. And his third was Driscilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa. He was a man capable of hiring thugs to murder his own closest supporters.

It was a man like this that Paul was to face now in Caesarea.

He is going to wait for the accusers to come. He locks up Paul. God's biggest man locked up to wait for a gang to come and place their charges.

I go back and think about V. 11 in which the Lord stood by him - and said, be of good cheer. Maybe this was still ringing in Paul's ears. He will care for me. Paul never went back on God. We all want God to be with us in time of need, in tragic experiences, in dark moments.

God promises his presence for those who live for him. If we continue in sin, we cannot expect God to help us.

Psalm 121:4 - reminds us that God is always on the job. He that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

Isaiah 41:10 - Fear thou not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee. Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

A little girl was very sick and only a tranfusion of blood was needed. Several tests were taken. They could not find her type. Finally, her little brother said try mine. They found that it was the right type. Soon, the fresh blood was flowing from his veins into hers. Later on, quite pale, the boy seemed frightened. The Doctor said, what is the matter. The boy said, Doctor, when do I die,

You're not going to die, and beside your sister is going to get well.

The little fellow was willing to give his blood - even though he thought it
meant his death.

We were dying in sin - Jesus came and gave his blood. His life for us. Because
of his blood, we can be saved (if you put your trust in him - (he will stand by you
forever) This was the secret of Paul's great life. As the prisoner that was
transferred to Caesarea. Paul still had God's word. The Lord stood by me.