

Sermon No. 420

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH

The book of Acts

CHAPTER 23

Scripture Reading: John 16:25-33

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Acts 21:

- Paul was warned not to return to Jerusalem
- He was recognised and set upon
- He was arrested by Claudius Lysias . . . placed in protective custody

Acts 22:

- He was given an opportunity to address the crowd
"I was once like you . . . until I met the LORD Jesus Christ"
"Jesus told me to take a message of hope to the Gentiles!"

22:22 They listened quietly up until he mentioned *the Gentiles*. They shouted away with him! Such a man can't be allowed to remain here. Kill him! He must die!

- Sad . . . because he only desired for them to know CHRIST
- Claudius ordered Paul scourged!
- That stopped when they discover he was a 'Roman citizen'
- Claudius has to be certain Paul isn't a terrorist – revolutionary
- Takes him to the Sanhedrin – council of elders – to interrogate Paul

Acts 23:

- Claudius knows the risks
- Every time Paul opens his mouth there is riot
- He stays with his troops and observes

Q. Will Claudius uncover something that will incriminate Paul?

Q. Will Paul finally get through to his people?

(1-2) Paul's direct approach!

- There are no examples of indirect approaches in the Bible!

John the Baptist, Peter, Samuel, Daniel . . .

¹ Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men *and* brethren,

- Immediately . . . he puts himself on equal footing with the council!
- They probably expected . . . "to the honourable high council of GOD's elect!"

I have lived in all good conscience before GOD until this day."

- Paul had a clear conscience . . . *I only do the will of GOD*
- Intentionally . . . he is implying that may not be the case for everyone present!

² And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.

(3-5) Paul's response to the punch in the face

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?"

- I wish we knew Paul's tone of voice . . . but whatever the tone . . . *he was accurate*
- A "whitewashed wall" . . . a veneer of purity covering a corrupt and wicked heart
- GOD will strike you . . . this greedy, Pro-Roman priest was brutally killed by Zionists
- Ironical . . . you claim to be all about the Law . . . but you break the Law!

⁴ And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" ⁵ 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.'"

- This isn't an apology but a statement

"I know it is wrong to speak evil of the ruler of GOD's people (Ex. 22:28) . . . but I didn't recognize him because he wasn't acting like"

(6-9) Paul attacks the council's hypocrisy

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!"

"Am I on trial because I have hope that the dead are raised?"

- He knew this would gain the support of the Pharisees
- It was the great controversy between the Pharisees and Sadducees . . . the Sadducees denied the reality of life after death (resurrection) but the Pharisees believed it
- Is he being divisive? NO, he is attacking the hypocrisy . . . here are two bitter enemies uniting together . . . to oppose the Gospel of Christ!

Norm . . . people with nothing in common will unite to oppose GOD

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." 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.

- This is the third time Claudius had to rescue Paul . . . he was certain the Jews are crazy
- Generally, over just 'one' word . . . 'Gentiles' . . . 'Resurrection'

REFLECT ON THINGS FOR A MOMENT

- Paul seems to have made his point . . . he seems to be in control
- But was he *really* happy with the result?

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." ¹² And 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. ¹³ Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. ¹⁴ They 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. ¹⁵ Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near."

¹⁶ So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷ Then Paul called one of the centurions to *him* and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him." ¹⁸ So 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." ¹⁹ Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside, and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?" ²⁰ And 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. ²¹ But 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."

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

²³ And 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; ²⁴ and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring *him* safely to Felix the governor." ²⁵ He wrote a letter in the following manner:

²⁶ *Claudius Lysias, To the most excellent governor Felix:*

Greetings

²⁷ *This 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.* ²⁸ *And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council.* ²⁹ *I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains.* ³⁰ *And 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.

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

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

What joy to have the comforting presence of the LORD Jesus!

NLT ¹¹ That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to Me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well."

1. The believer is never alone

- We see Paul alone . . . but NOT alone . . . NKJV – the Lord *stood by* him
- This MUST HAVE BEEN a difficult time for Paul . . . if it wasn't, I doubt the LORD would have said, BE ENCOURAGED!
- I truly believe he was SADDENED by the events?
 - (a) His heart longed for the salvation of his fellow Jews (Romans 9:1-4)
 - (b) His heart longed for opportunities to share Christ . . . it all came to nothing!

- a. He addressed a huge crowd – that caused a riot
- b. He addressed the influential Jewish council – that caused a punch up
- (c) Maybe Paul blamed himself for the missed opportunity

In Acts 24:20-21 he seems to suggest that it was “wrongdoing” on his part to challenge the council
- (d) Maybe he thought his reaction to strong

NOT DISCOURAGED . . . JUST DISSAPPOINTED . . . WE HAVE ALL CONSIDERED THESE THINGS FROM TIME TO TIME

- But it was at that POINT . . . that Jesus came to Paul and STOOD by him
- Is this unique to Paul?

Jesus promised always to be with every believer (Matthew 28:20) . . .
 “surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”

Why was he not discouraged . . . the results were not his responsibility

- His responsibility: Bring the Word of God and to testify of Jesus
- The results: Are always GOD’s responsibility
- Jesus said: You have testified for Me in Jerusalem . . . that is job well done

2. Jesus never loses sight of anyone

- He knows where we are . . . *and* . . . what we are going through
- Jesus never lost sight of someone just because they were in jail . . . or in trouble

When John Bunyan was in jail, a man visited him and said, “Friend, the Lord sent me to you, and I have been looking in half the prisons in England for you.” John Bunyan replied, “I don’t think the Lord sent you to me, because if He had, you would have come here first. God knows I have been here for years.”

- Flipside . . . you CANNOT HIDE from GOD!

3. His, being with us always, doesn't always mean He will deliver us!

- Paul had been miraculously delivered before
- But this time, the Lord chose to meet him. . . right where he was . . . in a jail cell!

We say, Lord deliver me *out* of my circumstances . . . He says, **I am with you always**

4. Listen carefully to the simplicity of the message He has for us!

- Everything JESUS said was so simple . . . so direct . . . so sweet

You don't need a dictionary of Theology . . . Degree in Applied Theology

Be encouraged, Paul!

- The next day, 40 Jewish assassins would gather together to kill him!

Paul didn't know that . . . but Jesus did!

Despite the hard road ahead . . . JESUS simply said . . . be encouraged, Paul!

JESUS knows our situation . . . His message . . . be encouraged, My child!

How can Jesus say that when everything doesn't appear to be that great?

- GOD is still on His throne
- GOD still holds to His promise that *all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose* (Romans 8:28)

Be of good cheer (NKJV) . . . be encouraged (NLT) . . . take courage (NIV)

- Greek – Euthumeo [I am cheerful]: Used five times in NT . . . always by Jesus . . .
 1. To the bedridden paralytic Jesus said . . . *Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you* (Matthew 9:2)
 2. To the woman with the 12-year bleeding problem . . . *Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well* (Matthew 9:22)
 3. To His frightened disciples on the Sea of Galilee . . . *Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid* (Matthew 14:27)
 4. To His disciples the night before His crucifixion . . . *In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world* (John 16:33)
 5. To Paul here in Acts 23:11

FINAL POINT: Notice, Jesus doesn't come alongside Paul to say well done – you take a break now – He says there is more that can be done!

- Paul may have been PUT OFF momentarily about the lack of results in Jerusalem . . . AND HE COULD have been fearful ABOUT the threats on his life
- The most encouraging words Jesus gave him . . . for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome
- That is how Paul could face his enemies the next day with a smile
- He knew then that they were powerless against him, *because God had more for him to do!*
- It can be said to every child of GOD . . . *there is more for you to do*
 - § More people to bring to Christ
 - § More ways for you to glorify Him

- § More people to pray for
- § Humbler ways to serve His people
- § Hungrier people to feed
- § More saints to encourage

Spurgeon

A divine decree ordains for you greater and more trying service than as yet you have seen. A future awaits you, and no power on the earth or under the earth can rob you of it; therefore, be of good cheer

FINAL (FINAL) POINT: The promise of more work comes with the promise of continued protection

- When Claudius ordered 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen: 470 trained Roman soldiers to escort Paul out of Jerusalem
- It was as if GOD wanted to exaggerate His faithfulness to Paul
- GOD wanted to show him beyond any doubt that the promise of Jesus was true