



Acts 21:27-40

Trusting the Lord's purpose and presence in affliction

Introduction

1 Peter 4:19

- If you are the Apostle Paul and God plans for you to preach the gospel in Rome, what does that look like?
- No matter where he goes, or who and what he encounters, the Lord is with him
- The Lord promises to be with us in and through it all

Hebrews 13:5

Psalms 23

False charges are brought against a servant of the gospel (21:27-30)

27 When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him,

- Paul is in the temple to fulfill purification rites
- The motivation for putting his honor of the Law on display was to keep a door of evangelism open to Jewish people and to maintain unity among New Covenant believers
- When Paul's time of purification was almost complete, Jews from Asia recognized him and stirred up the Jews against Paul
- The mob is stirred up to anger and begins to attack Paul

False charges are brought against a servant of the gospel (21:27-30)

²⁸ crying out, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” ²⁹ For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

- Paul's reputation precedes him
 - Some of it is true - he is no longer adhering to aspects of the Law that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, because he believes in Jesus as the promised Messiah
 - Some of it is false - he doesn't teach against Jewish people, the Law of Moses, or the temple, and he didn't bring a Gentile onto the grounds and courts of the temple

False charges are brought against a servant of the gospel (21:27-30)

- Points of clarification
 - Paul no longer believes that God's redeeming purpose is restricted to the nation of Israel
 - The Law is good and holy, revealing the character and justice of God, and providing awareness of sin
 - Romans 7:7
 - 1 Timothy 1:8-11
 - Paul is not opposed to Jerusalem but recognizes that the temple in Jerusalem has fulfilled its purpose, and Jesus promises its destruction is coming (70 AD)

False charges are brought against a servant of the gospel (21:27-30)

- One of the falsehoods spoken against Paul is that he brought a Gentile into the restricted courts of the temple
- The Jewish exclusivity of the temple courts practiced by Jewish authorities was supported by the Roman government
 - The Jews were scrupulous about protecting the temple and their traditions
 - They capitalize on this to take vengeance on Paul, whom they consider to be a traitor to the Jewish faith

³⁰ Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut.

- The collective action of the Jews in Jerusalem becomes mob violence quickly
- The instigators focus the crowd's activity on Paul to have him removed from the temple grounds
- The enemy inspiring opposition to truth is nothing new

Delivered from death by being arrested (21:31-36)

³¹ And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. ³² He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

- What is the intention of this Jewish mob?
- They intend to kill Paul by beating him to death
- When the Jews see the tribune and soldiers heading their way, they stopped assaulting Paul
- Is the Lord shepherding Paul or has the Lord abandoned him?
 - Paul is faithfully obeying the commission given by the Lord Jesus to make disciples of all nations, and the Lord promises to be with him
 - The Lord's sovereign hand is on these events
 - Acts 19:21
 - Acts 23:11

Delivered from death by being arrested (21:31-36)

- Things in life may get crazy, but we can trust the Lord to be with us and to direct us where He intends for us to be
- The Lord does not ask us to read tea leaves but to learn His word, trust, and obey
 - Deuteronomy 29:29
 - John 17:16-17
- People of God are to be people of the book who are guided through life by the light of Scriptural truth, not feelings and premonitions

Delivered from death by being arrested (21:31-36)

³³ Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another. And as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks.

- When the tribune arrived, he had Paul arrested and likely chained Paul's wrists to two Roman soldiers
- Remember the prophecy of Agabus
 - Acts 21:10-11
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22
- Realizing he was getting no clarity from the crowd, the tribune commands the soldiers to take him to their compound
- Paul's arrest is an intervention of God's grace and a means of God's direction
- If the tribune hadn't taken Paul into custody, he would have been killed

³⁵ And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, ³⁶ for the mob of the people followed, crying out, "Away with him!"

- Paul is taken to the steps that lead up to the Roman soldier's compound
- The crowd is still in a lather, so they carried Paul away from the clutches of the mob

A case of mistaken identity turns to favor (21:37-40)

- ³⁷ As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, “May I say something to you?” And he said, “Do you know Greek?*
- ³⁸ Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?”*
- Paul asks the tribune permission to speak
 - Hearing Paul speaking Greek took the tribune by surprise
 - He now thinks Paul may be a Greek-speaking Egyptian fugitive that led a failed uprising in Jerusalem and then retreated to the wilderness with four thousand men

A case of mistaken identity turns to favor (21:37-40)

³⁹ Paul replied, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people.” ⁴⁰ And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying:

- Paul informs the tribune that he is mistaken
- Paul is not an Egyptian, but a Jew from the prominent and refined Roman city of Tarsus in the region of Cilicia
- Respectfully, Paul requests the opportunity to address the mob
- Shocked by the turn of events that Paul is no longer being treated as a common criminal, when they see that Paul is preparing to speak to them, they are silent

Questions to Consider

- As a follower of Jesus, how is it reassuring to you to know you are never outside the care and provision of the Lord?
- How are God's care and provision supported by this account of the attack and arrest of Paul?
- Why should you not be surprised when you experience opposition because of your devotion to Biblical truth?
- How does this story help you to see that God can deliver you from threatening situations in unexpected ways?
- What are some things you need to repent of regarding trusting and obeying the Lord?



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