



ACTS 23:12-35

GOD'S SOVEREIGN HAND
LEADS HIS PEOPLE

JEWES DEVISE A PLOT TO KILL PAUL (23:12-15)

¹² When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. ¹³ There were more than forty who made this conspiracy. ¹⁴ They went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul.

- The following day, yet another plot is hatched by the Jews to murder Paul
 - This faction of Jews probably belongs to the sect of the Sadducees, since the Pharisees sided with Paul the day before
 - Witnessing how Paul influenced the Pharisees intensifies their desire to kill him
- We should never underestimate the influence of Satanic opposition to the gospel and how he can inspire even religious people with the madness of resentment

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¹⁵ Now therefore you, along with the council, give notice to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case more exactly. And we are ready to kill him before he comes near.”

- These zealots share their scheme with the leaders of the Sadducees
- Jewish leaders and Jewish men are accusing Paul of breaking God’s law
- Self-righteous anger makes them lawbreakers
 - Murder violates the sixth command
 - Exodus 20:13
 - They engage in lies and deception, another violation of God’s law
 - Proverbs 6:16–19
- When people decide to take matters into their own hands, it doesn’t mean they can
- God is sovereign over all things, and His purpose will prevail

PAUL'S NEPHEW HEARS AND INFORMS ABOUT THE SCHEME TO KILL HIS UNCLE (23:16-22)

¹⁶ Now the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷ Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the tribune, for he has something to tell him."

- Paul's nephew comes to where Paul is being held and informs him of the plan
 - It is probable that Paul's conversion to Jesus as Savior and Lord cost him relationships with family members
 - Matthew 10:34–39
 - The Spirit of God gave new life to Paul, and he was willing to consider everything a loss, family included
 - Philippians 3:7–9

PAUL'S NEPHEW HEARS AND INFORMS ABOUT THE SCHEME TO KILL HIS UNCLE (23:16-22)

¹⁸ So he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, "Paul the prisoner called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, as he has something to say to you." ¹⁹ The tribune took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?"

- God can grant His people favor with others for His purpose
 - God caused the favor of Potiphar to be shown to Joseph
 - Genesis 39:2–4
 - God caused the favor of the jailor to be shown to Joseph
 - Genesis 39:21
 - God gave the favor of Egyptians to be with Israel and Moses
 - Exodus 11:3
- God can grant you favor with others for His purpose
- God granted Paul and his nephew favor with the Roman tribune

PAUL'S NEPHEW HEARS AND INFORMS ABOUT THE SCHEME TO KILL HIS UNCLE (23:16-22)

²⁰ And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more closely about him. ²¹ But do not be persuaded by them, for more than forty of their men are lying in ambush for him, who have bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him. And now they are ready, waiting for your consent." ²² So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, "Tell no one that you have informed me of these things."

- Paul's nephew unpacks the scheme of the forty-plus Jewish men who want to murder Paul
- He encourages the tribune not to believe the ruse
- God can grant you favor with believers and unbelievers for His purposes

ROMAN TRIBUNE ACTS TO PROTECT PAUL'S LIFE (23:23-30)

²³ Then he called two of the centurions and said, "Get ready two hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night. ²⁴ Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix the governor."

- The tribune authorizes 470 Roman troops to escort Paul
- The tribune tells the centurion to put Paul on a horse to make the journey

²⁵ And he wrote a letter to this effect: ²⁶ "Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings. ²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. ²⁸ And desiring to know the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council. ²⁹ I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. ³⁰ And when it was disclosed to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him."

- The tribunes letter distorts the truth to put him in a more favored light
- The tribune puts Paul in a favored light
- Jerusalem has become an inferno of hatred and hostility toward Paul
- The tribune is doing his duty as a leader in the Roman army to protect the life of a Roman citizen

PAUL IS COVERTLY TRANSFERRED TO THE COURT OF FELIX IN CAESAREA (23:31-35)

³¹ *So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.*

³² *And on the next day they returned to the barracks, letting the horsemen go on with him.*

- 470 Roman troops take Paul from Jerusalem to Antipatris during the night on the 35-mile journey to Antipatris
- The two-hundred soldiers on foot were keeping pace with those on horseback
- Leaving Paul with 270 mounted troops to continue to Caesarea, two hundred foot soldiers returned to Jerusalem

PAUL IS COVERTLY TRANSFERRED TO THE COURT OF FELIX IN CAESAREA (23:31-35)

³³ When they had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. ³⁴ On reading the letter, he asked what province he was from. And when he learned that he was from Cilicia, ³⁵ he said, “I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive.” And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod’s praetorium.

- Arriving in Caesarea, the Roman centurions deliver the letter from the tribune, Claudius Lysias, to Felix, the governor of the region
- He did not need to extradite citizens from Cilicia back to Cilicia but had the authority to handle the matter in Caesarea
- The Lord wants Paul in Rome, and along the way, He has gospel work for him to do
- Paul will be held in Herod’s praetorium for two years
- The evidence of God’s sovereign direction and care for Paul is evident to us in the Biblical record
- It may not have been that apparent to the associates of Paul at the time
- Proverbs 16:9
- Proverbs 19:21
- Romans 8:28
- The grace of God brings guilt and the gospel to call us out of darkness into the saving light of God’s mercy in Christ
- With lives devoted to the gospel mission of our Lord, we can trust in direction and care
- Trust and obey!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How would you describe the gospel mission of your life?
- What are some of the struggles you've had with challenges that caused you to doubt the care and direction of the Lord?
- What principles can you take from this passage and other Scriptures to increase your faith?



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