

The Lord Stood By Him

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Acts 21:27-23:11

Acts 21:27–40

Paul Arrested in the Temple

[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, [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. [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. [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. [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. [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 Speaks to the People

[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?” [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: (ESV)

Acts 22

[1] “Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you.”

[2] And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said:

[3] “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as

all of you are this day. [4] I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, [5] as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

[6] “As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. [7] And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ [8] And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ [9] Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. [10] And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.’ [11] And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.

[12] “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, [13] came to me, and standing by me said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. [14] And he said, ‘The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; [15] for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. [16] And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’

[17] “When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance [18] and saw him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ [19] And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. [20] And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.’ [21] And he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

Paul and the Roman Tribune

[22] Up to this word they listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live.” [23] And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, [24] the tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by flogging, to find out why they were shouting against him like this. [25] But when they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?” [26] When the centurion heard this, he went to the tribune and said to him, “What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen.” [27] So the tribune came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” And he said, “Yes.” [28] The tribune answered, “I bought this citizenship for a large sum.” Paul said, “But I am a citizen by birth.” [29] So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

Paul Before the Council

[30] But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them. (ESV)

Acts 23:1–11

[1] And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to 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 is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?” [4] Those who stood by said, “Would you revile God’s high priest?” [5] And Paul said, “I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’”

[6] Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.” [7] And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. [8] For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. [9] Then a great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees’ party stood up and contended sharply, “We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?” [10] And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks.

[11] The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.” (ESV)

Scene 1 - Paul Seized at the Temple

Scene 2 - Paul Appeals to the People at the Prison Steps

Scene 3 - Paul Speaks to the Sanhedrin

Observation and Application:

1. Faithful gospel proclamation will always bring opposition

- The people of God have always experienced opposition throughout history.
- And we should not be surprised when we experience it as well.
- Paul experienced rejection. He was beaten, falsely accused, imprisoned, bound.
- Paul and Barnabas, in Acts 14, after Paul had been stoned and left for dead, went on to continue preaching the gospel

“saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” -- Acts 14:22

- We may not be called to suffer to the degree that Paul did but rest assured, people will oppose the gospel.
- We can anticipate opposition, but we can also anticipate help from our Lord!

2. God saves all kinds of people

3. Paul was winsome in his appeal

- He spoke in Hebrew, the language of the people.

4. The Lord stands by His people

- Can you imagine how much a privilege that would be? To have Christ next to you in suffering? To have Christ next to your side?
- The Lord loves Paul, and came to him to minister to his weakness.
- The Lord doesn't promise to take away our problems. The Lord doesn't promise to eradicate our problems. He didn't say to Paul – "I'm going to wipe out your troubles. I'm going to clear the path and make it easy." However, God was with him in the trials he faced.

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." -- Psalm 23:4

"Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." -- Daniel 3:25

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."
-- Isaiah 43:1-2

Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Re-read the text, Acts 21:27-23:11. What initial observations and insights do you have from reading this text?
- As the Apostle Paul proclaimed Christ, he faced serious opposition--yet he continued on, he persevered, he continued to proclaim the gospel. What lessons can be learned from his example?
- The Lord stood by Paul in the midst of the severe trial he was facing. How does this encourage you when you consider your own life and trials/difficulties you may be facing?
- What areas in the world today are you aware of where people are facing persecution?
- Consider taking time to pray for the advance of the gospel around the world and in our area as well. Pray that God would help His people everywhere to faithfully proclaim Christ, even when there is opposition.