

The Acts of the Apostles

Sermon Number: 31

Acts 22:30 – 23:35

July 8, 2012

Paul's Ticket to Rome

My last sermon in this series on the Book of Acts was on April 19th and ten weeks is a long time between sermons for anyone, including this preacher, to have much recollection for the sake of continuity.

But I will spare you a lengthy review to bring us up to date and only point out that Paul was about to be killed by a mob. The tribune intervened and took Paul aside and ordered his men to chain him and flog him in order to learn the truth about why the mob wanted to kill Paul.

A tribune was a colonel in charge of 1000 men and would be the commander over the garrison at Jerusalem.

The Greek word **chiliarchos** is translated:

Commander: NKJV, NIV, NASB

Chief Captain: KJV

Tribune: ESV

χιλίαρχος **chiliarchos** (khil-ee'-ar-khos);

The commander of a thousand soldiers ("chiliarch"); i.e. colonel:

(Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary.

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Paul appeals to the centurion standing close by,

"Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?" [22:25]

The Roman system of justice was fair and every Roman citizen had rights of evidence and trial in a court. When the centurion and the tribune heard that Paul was a free-born Roman citizen they were afraid because of how close they had come to mistreating a fellow Roman without due process of law.

Chaining and flogging a Roman citizen unjustly were serious charges.

Paul was not afraid to die for Christ but that does not mean that he could not defend himself and use the means at his disposal to stay alive and continue witnessing until God Himself closes the book on his life.

In every situation in which he found himself Paul preached the Gospel.

Paul had a story to tell about how Jesus changed him from a murderer and a blasphemer to a lover of Jesus Christ.

What was **“Paul’s Ticket to Rome?”**

Answer: The resurrection of Jesus Christ!

No event in history is more important to a Christian than the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. While it is certainly true that you can’t deny the virgin birth; the substitutionary sinless life under God’s holy, just, and good law; the vicarious death on the cross; all inseparable parts of the Gospel; still it is the resurrection that validates that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Christ. And the resurrection is what Paul used as his ticket to Rome.

The resurrection simply proves that Jesus is who He said He was.

The main argument of 1 Corinthians 15 is the essential fact of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Death is defeated for the Christian; preaching is not a useless endeavor; and eternal life begins the instant justification by faith alone is applied to the sinner who repents and confesses that Jesus is Lord!

This is the day after the Romans arrested Paul thereby rescuing him from the Jewish mob that would have beaten him to death. The tribune {commander} of the Jerusalem garrison called for the Jewish Council to meet so he could find out exactly what charges were being made against Paul. He needed information so that he could make a report to his superiors. The Jews would be offended by the authority of the Romans over them in demanding that the Sanhedrin call a meeting.

Acts 22:30

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.

Paul was unchained and brought into the council chambers.

Paul wasted no time in taking control of the proceedings.

Paul claims he is innocent Acts 23:1

And looking intently at the council, Paul said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day."

Paul addressed the Council {Sanhedrin} as his equal, calling them "brothers."

The Asian Jews had accused Paul of teaching against the Law {Moses} and of bringing a Gentile into the temple.

Acts 21:27-28

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." ESV

However, when the Sanhedrin met they never mention these charges, probably because they had no evidence to back them up. The real issue is stated by Paul himself:

"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." 23:6

But here is a question. How can Paul make such a claim?

Acts 23:1

And looking intently at the council, Paul said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day."

What about Stephen whom you consented unto his death?

What about the persecution of Christians? [Those of The Way]

Paul's life before Christ was one of complete dedication to God's Law.

Philippians 3:6 ... as to righteousness, under the law blameless.

So even his persecution of the church was based on a burning zeal for God.

Acts 22:3-4

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,

Acts 26:9-11

⁹ "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

1 Timothy 1:12-17

¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paul claims he always followed his conscience but at the same time he does not claim to be innocent. He was still guilty as he says he is the "chief of sinners."

In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul makes the distinction between the judgment of one's conscience and the judgment of the Lord. Just because his conscience was clear did not mean he was innocent before God.

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. ³ But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴ I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵ Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

The Answer of the High Priest Acts 23:2

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

Ananias was incensed by what he thought was insolence by Paul and he ordered the sergeant-at-arms to slap Paul across the mouth!

Paul Strikes Back Acts 23:3-5

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.'"

Paul calls the high priest a “whitewashed wall” and accused him of breaking the Jewish Law. A man is protected under the Law until he is proven guilty.

It was the same in the Jewish trial of Jesus; they had made up their mind to kill Jesus and they broke nearly every law of a Jewish trial.

Paul accused the high priest of hypocrisy – a wicked heart hidden behind a facade of religious piety; i.e., a “whitewashed wall.”

When Paul was told this man was the high priest his reply can be understood several ways. Paul acknowledged that it was against the Law to insult a ruler of the people.

It may be that the high priest did not have on his priestly garments.

What I like better is that Paul is being sarcastic; implying that a man as disreputable as him could be a high priest.

Paul's words, , "God is going to strike you..." are prophetic.

Ananias was later removed from office and killed by an assassin's knife.

Divide and Conquer Acts 23:6-9

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?"

Sadducees and Pharisees:

Paul knew his audience, the Council. The majority of the Sanhedrin was members of the sect of the Sadducees and of high priestly aristocracy.

A significant minority would be experts in Jewish Law and were scribes and Pharisees.

The Sadducees were sympathizers with the Romans and sought to maintain the status quo because it was to their advantage. Any trouble with the Romans could result in their losing what freedom they had under Roman authority.

The Pharisees were silent but resented Roman rule.

The Sadducees accepted only the Pentateuch {the five books of Moses} as authoritative. The Pharisees accepted most of the Scripture but also believed oral law and traditions were also authoritative.

The Sadducees believed in man's free will; the Pharisees believed in predestination. Properly understood, there is no real conflict in free will and predestination.

The Sadducees denied the existence of the spirit world, viz. angels and demons; the Pharisees believed in both.

Sadducees denied life after death and the possibility of a resurrection; the Pharisees were committed to a belief in the resurrection of the dead.

So, Paul knew where to attack, at the main argument between these two factions; the resurrection; "Paul's Ticket to Rome."

The Council became “unglued” when Paul announced that he was a second generation Pharisee and was on trial because of his hope in the resurrection of the dead.

The real issue.

If the resurrection is possible and if Jesus of Nazareth actually rose from the dead then Jesus is Messiah! A Jew, who believed in the resurrection of the dead, saw Jesus as the fulfillment of all of the prophets. Everything depended on the resurrection.

A Visit from the Living Jesus Acts 23:10-11

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."

The argument that erupted between the Sadducees and the Pharisees quickly escalated into violence. Sophisticated religious men stopped talking and started brawling! It was apparent that Paul’s life was in danger, so the Romans take Paul into their barracks.

The same Paul who was courageous before the Sanhedrin was also capable of fear and discouragement. Paul needed to know that he would get to Rome and that is precisely what the Lord promised him.

Do Not Let Paul Live! Acts 23:12-35

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. 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."

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." 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?" 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."

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." 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."

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. 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.

Antipatris was a city built by Herod the Great, and called by this name in honor of his father Antipater. It lay between Caesarea and Lydda, two miles inland on the great Roman road from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Seething with rage over being frustrated in their attempt to lynch Paul and unable to successfully bring charges against him over 40 Jewish men took an oath to kill Paul before they ate or drank again.

The son of Paul's sister heard of the plot and came to visit Paul at the fortress.

The commander listened to the youth's report and acted quickly to transfer him to Caesarea with an escort of 470 soldiers. By moving Paul some of the heat of the matter that had raged for three days in Jerusalem could be relieved.

It is unlikely that any of the would-be assassins starved to death because they could not keep their oath. The Talmud conveniently provided that such vows could be annulled by going to a rabbi and asking to be released from the obligation.

Paul is now under Roman guard at Herod's palace which is 60 miles from Jerusalem. Paul still has a long way to travel to get to Rome but the Lord has assured him that he would get there.

The circumstances that eventually took Paul to the court of Caesar in Rome had been arranged by the sovereign God. God used theological arrogance, religious bigotry, family loyalty, and a secular government as the means to move this man to where He wanted him to be. Paul must have enjoyed watching how God is going to work this all out for him.

Through it all, the resurrection of Jesus is affirmed.

No one is alone when they witness to the truth of the Gospel.

Hebrews 13:1-6

Let brotherly love continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. ³ Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. ⁴ Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. ⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶ So we can confidently say,

"The Lord is my helper;
I will not fear;
what can man do to me?"

ESV