

THE LORD STOOD WITH HIM

ACTS 23:1-11

Text:

Introduction:

At the close of chapter 22, we see Paul imprisoned in Jerusalem. The chief captain of the Roman soldiers was about to examine Paul by scourging when Paul told him that he was a Roman citizen. Because of uncertainty about how to handle the matter, Paul was taken to a council of the high priests.

1. THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL (VS. 1)

Acts 23:1

¹ And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

A. A Courageous Testimony

Paul faced the council with a look of conscious integrity and unfaltering courage even though he knew many of the council members wanted him dead.

Possible some on the council were some of his fellow-pupils from the school of Gamaliel.

But any remaining bonds of friendship were strained to the breaking point by Paul's commitment to Christ.

B. A Confident Testimony

Paul had a good conscience while professing faith in Christ.

Having a good conscience means that there was no part of his life in which he acted as a dishonest or hypocritical man.

He was now as fully determined to maintain his profession of Christianity as he ever was to maintain that of Judaism before he became a Christian.

Romans 9:1

¹I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

Imagine Paul as he is being accused of being the ringleader of trouble. What a joy it was for him to say, "My conscience is clear."

2. THE TESTING OF PAUL (VS. 2-10)

Acts 23:2-10

²And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. ³Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? ⁴And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? ⁵Then

said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. ⁶ But when Paul perceived that the 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: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. ⁷ And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. ⁸ For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. ⁹ And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. ¹⁰ And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle.

Someone once said, “A faith that can’t be tested, can’t be trusted. God brings men into deep waters not to drown them, but to cleanse them.”

A. Tested by an Angry Priest

Paul was smitten n the face by direction of the High Priest. Paul had been a part of these councils before and knew what Ananias had commanded was illegal.

B. Tested by the Sanhedrin

The Sadducees denied the bodily resurrection of Christ.

The religious governing bodies of the Jews were divided between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Both sides disapproved of Paul's teaching, but he was able to use their division to keep them from reaching a verdict against him.

C. Tested by the Crowd

The Sadducees had stirred the crowd against Paul some days earlier.

Acts 21:28

²⁸ Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all *men* every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

It says they “strove” which means “to contend fiercely.”

This was a very heated argument, perhaps to the point coming to blows.

God never puts burdens on weak shoulders.

God educates and tests our faith by trials that increase in proportion to our faith.

God expects us to do mature work and endure mature afflictions, only after we have reached a mature status in Christ Jesus.

We understand our trials will multiply as we proceed toward Heaven.

3. THE TRIUMPH OF PAUL (VS. 11)

Acts 23:11

¹¹ And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

A. The Lord Stood With Him

Psalms 46:1-2

¹ God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ² Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

Isaiah 41:14

¹⁴ Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 43:1-2

¹ But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine. ² When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Matthew 28:20

²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

John 14:18

¹⁸ I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

B. The Lord Spoke to Him

It's easier to hear God's still small voice when we have a heavy heart.

Sometimes we may feel like we have failed, but God see our lives from a Heavenly perspective.

Someone said, "What life does to us depends on what life finds in us."

God reminded Paul that He was there in the dark days, that He had a plan for his life, and that there were many people who would still support him.

James 4:8

⁸ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.