

Radiant Church, May 3, 2020
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Acts 22:22-23:11

Acts 22:22-24 *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." And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, the tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by flogging, to find out why there were shouting against him like this.*

Not unlike our own culture: If someone disagrees with me, that person is bad. I want that person to go away along with their opposing opinion. This is why dialogue is a lost art in our society. And...if someone disagrees with me, I'll just yell louder and louder until I drown them out.

Acts 22:25-26 *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?" 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."*

Paul is using something God gave him at birth - Roman citizenship. And for right now, it's handy.

Acts 22:27-28 *So the tribune came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" And he said, "Yes." The tribune answered, "I bought this citizenship for a large sum." Paul said, "But I am a citizen by birth."*

Citizenship was gained by right (high status or office)
Or by reward (those who had served the Empire well) Passed on from father to son
Or could be bought (not a fee, but a bribe paid to some corrupt official)

Acts 22:29 *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.*

Roman officials were charged with keeping Roman law. They themselves also had to keep the law.

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.*

Acts 23:1-2 *And looking intently at the council, Paul said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day." And the high priest, Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.*

They couldn't see how Paul could have a clear conscience and not be just like them

Acts 23:3 *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?"*

Ananias was said by Josephus the historian to have been a "hoarder of money"
He even took the tithes devoted to the priests for himself by violence
He had his own little army of freedom fighters.
10 years later those same freedom fighters assassinated Ananias

Acts 23:4-5 *Those who stood by said, "Would you revile God's high priest?" 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.'"*

Commentators are split:

Informal meeting of the council, therefore Ananias wasn't formerly dressed?
Too many voices for Paul to hear who exactly commanded him to be hit?
Paul is being sarcastic? (Can't believe a guy like you could be high priest)
Paul's bad eyesight? (all he could see was what looked like a white wall)

In any respect, Paul regrets his words. Paul is human.

Acts 23:6 *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."*

The Pharisees were the minority party represented in the council at that time

1 Corinthians 15:14, 17 *And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.*

The Pharisees agreed with Paul that there was hope of a final resurrection
But Paul is also saying that Jesus was the fulfillment of that hope

For Paul, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was the vital point of the gospel

The Sadducees did not:

No belief in miracles, angels, spirits or anyone ever being resurrected
Only valued the first 5 books of the Bible (nothing about resurrection in there)

Acts 23:7-8 *And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.*

Acts 23:9 *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?"*

This is not the Pharisees agreeing with Paul. This is them disagreeing with the Sadducees. The minority disagreeing with the majority.

Acts 23:10 *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.*

Paul spends another night in the barracks. He must have been discouraged

He'd come to the Jerusalem church, and found them unsupportive

He'd suffered physically and emotionally again

He's in jail again

He likely questioned even regretted his words to the high priest

And the Lord shows up again, as Paul needs encouragement again

Acts 23:11 *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."*

How was this encouraging to Paul? Same way it can be encouraging for us!

Tony Merida says it this way:

The Lord knows us

John 10:14 *I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.*

The Lord is with us

Hebrews 13:5b *I will never leave you or forsake you.*

The Lord is for us

Romans 8:31 *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

Have courage

You did well to testify about Me

The Lord is not finished with us

Philippians 1:6 *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of Jesus Christ*

Why is this encouraging to us?

John 11:25-26 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who believes in me shall never die.*

Knowing the end game, how our lives will finally end up is what gives us confidence to press on with life in its present tense

Having a gospel perspective means we are confident of 2 things:

Jesus has already won

And Jesus is preparing us to be with Him in eternity

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 *for God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*

So we can take courage

And, we can testify about Him - to ourselves and to others

The object of hope is future, the experience of hope is present

Psalm 31:19 *Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!*