

Acts 23:12-35

The Lord's midnight assurance that Paul would certainly be his witness in Rome, as he had been in Jerusalem, came not a moment too soon.

The next morning over forty zealous Jews swore themselves to a pact to take Paul's life before they tasted another meal.

Their conspiracy would be thwarted through the sharp ears of Paul's nephew and the decisive action of the Roman tribune.

Summary

In Acts 23:12-35, Luke records the Jewish plot to have Paul killed and the Lord's sovereign providence in foiling the conspiracy and ensuring Paul's safe passage to Rome, teaching us that in all circumstances believers are under God's all powerful protection and care.

1. Murderous Zeal vv. 12-15

A group of over forty Jews bound themselves by an oath not to taste food or drink before they had killed Paul.

The leaders of the Sanhedrin would offer to reconvene the council.

The assassins would then waylay Paul and his bodyguards en route from the fortress to the council chamber, killing him on the spot.

2. Exposed Plot vv. 13-22

Paul's nephew learned of the assassination plot and immediately warned Paul.

Paul summoned the centurion supervising his guards, asking him to conduct the young man to the tribune who swore the youth to secrecy and then dismissed him.

Here we see the seamless integration of God's sovereign purpose and the decisions of his responsible creatures.

The assassination plot was bound to fail, for the Lord had guaranteed that Paul would testify in Rome.

Yet God would accomplish his plan to preserve Paul not apart from but through the actions of his nephew and the Roman commander.

“When the biblical truth of God's sovereignty grips our hearts, it frees us from fear without producing fatalism or indifference.”

3. Decisive Action vv. 23-35

The tribune did not delay in making preparations to transfer his prisoner to a safer venue. Summoning two centurions, he ordered them to prepare the two hundred

infantrymen under their command to march that night, along with seventy mounted soldiers and an additional two hundred spearmen.

To introduce the prisoner and orient the governor to his case, the tribune summarized events in a brief but formal letter.

Lysias condensed and rearranged the events surrounding the riot in the temple to highlight his service to the Empire and its citizens.

From Luke's perspective, the most important sentence in the tribune's letter is the statement that the Jewish leaders' complaint concern questions about their law, and that no charge against Paul warranted death or imprisonment.

Just as some of the Pharisees found no fault in Paul's theology (**Acts 23:9**), so a Gentile official could not find in the accusations against Paul's conduct any legal ground for the serious penalties (execution, incarceration, exile) that Rome reserved to itself to impose.

Finally a Jewish king, Herod Agrippa, would render the verdict that Paul's actions deserved neither death nor prison, and that he could have been released from custody had he not appealed to Caesar (**Acts 26:31-32**).

The soldiers and mounted cavalry set out, as commanded, under the cover of darkness, in the third hour of the night.

They pressed hard to reach Antipatris on the Judea-Samaria border, thirty-seven miles to the north-west, the next morning.

The haste put Paul virtually beyond reach of Jerusalem's murderous zealots, and over half way to the governor's palace in Caesarea.

The four hundred foot soldiers, having escorted their prisoner to Judea's border, returned to reinforce their cohort in Jerusalem, while the seventy horsemen, still a sizeable security force, rode on with Paul to Caesarea.

There they delivered the letter and the prisoner into the custody of the governor who promised to hear the case as soon as Paul's accusers arrived from Jerusalem.

Thus Paul's testimony about Christ would advance to a new level in the imperial hierarchy.

Although the charges against Paul were untrue and his captivity undeserved, instead of wallowing in self-pity he exploited them as opportunities to speak for King Jesus.

How do you view and use the injustices you suffer?