

PAUL'S ARREST AT JERUSALEM

BIBLE TEXT : Acts 21:1-40; 22:1-30; 23:1-35.

LESSON 370 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (II Timothy 2:12).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Acts 21:1-40

1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the *day* following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished *our* course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

10 And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die

Bible References:

Notes:

En Route to Jerusalem

A sad farewell on the shore, to the elders of the church of Ephesus, and Paul's third missionary journey was under way. The first important stop was at Tyre, where the ship was to unload. Seven days were spent with the people of God there. Paul had been there before; Jesus had also walked along the shores of Tyre. It was there that a woman asked Jesus to have mercy on her daughter who was ill, and the daughter was healed.

The people of Tyre asked Paul not to go to Jerusalem, for they knew that trouble awaited him there. They did not wish to see him place himself in a position where his life would be in danger; but Paul was a fearless man of God, and he had unbounded joy underneath it all. Sometimes when we have a few aches and pains, our rejoicing is temporarily gone; but not so with Paul.

The men, women, and children of the church went to the seashore and there they knelt and prayed before bidding farewell to Paul. It must have been a great prayer meeting, as their hearts were touched by Paul's courage in the face of imminent danger.

In Cæsarea

In Cæsarea, Paul spent many days at the house of Philip, the evangelist. He had four daughters who also preached. While there, a prophet named Agabus came down and "took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Others also pled with him not to go to Jerusalem. Paul answered: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

In Jerusalem

Paul proceeded to Jerusalem, where the saints were most happy to see him. It was perhaps as if someone in our church had been on a missionary journey, and when he returned everyone was overjoyed.

We are not told very much about Paul's appearance, but he made a great impression on people wherever he went. How do we account for that? It was divine authority; the Holy Spirit attended all that he did and all that he said. The world today is much taken up and carried away with speakers who have great personalities. The personality of a Christian is controlled by the Spirit of the living God. When we read Paul's history, we must conclude that he impressed the people with whom he came in contact because in his character, nature, and all he was much like the Lord Jesus. Paul was one of the greatest Apostles, if not the chief, but he was humble.

The Tumult

All went well for Paul in Jerusalem until he entered the Temple. At once the Jews stirred up the people and laid hands on him. The whole city was stirred and the people took Paul out of

at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

16 There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18 And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20 And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all *men* every

the Temple and would have killed him, but the chief captain came to his rescue. He asked who Paul was and what he had done. The mob cried, "Away with him."

We are reminded of the day when Jesus stood in Pilate's judgment hall, and the people cried out, "Away with this man" (Luke 23:18). Evil men have often succeeded in doing away with righteous men. But there is coming a day when the righteous Judge will punish all wicked men. Those who have caused Christians to suffer and have not repented and received forgiveness will be tormented day and night in an eternal hell.

Paul was taken into the castle, or prison, and, standing on the stairs, he was given permission to speak. When the people quieted down he told of having arrested men and women who followed Christ, before he was converted. He told how the Lord had "arrested" him that day on the Damascus road. The mob listened for a time, but soon cried out again, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live."

Then the chief captain gave orders to have Paul scourged, in order to determine why the people were so much against him. This Roman scourging was one of the most cruel treatments and produced terrible pain. They would bind a man to a post and with a whip with bits of metal braided into it would beat his bare back until the blood gushed out and the veins and muscles were exposed. This was done in order to force him to confess anything, which he might be trying to cover.

Paul was a Jew, it is true, but he was also a Roman citizen. So he asked, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" They told the chief captain, who then asked Paul, "Tell me, art thou a Roman?" Paul answered that he was. At once the chief captain and the others became frightened and loosed Paul of his bands. He was told that he must appear before the council, or Sanhedrin, the Jewish name for it. This was a body of seventy men, and was controlled by the high priest. They dealt with religious matters as well as with civil and criminal laws.

Before the Council

As Paul sat before this group of men, he noticed that some of them were Pharisees and the others were Sadducees. They differed in their religious beliefs. The Pharisees believed in the Resurrection, in angels and spirits, but the Sadducees did not. (Someone suggests it will be easy to remember it, if we think of it this way: Pharisees, "That is fair, I see"; Sadducees, "That is sad, you see.") The world today is still full of this unbelief, which was manifested by the Sadducees. Some modern religious do not believe in the Resurrection.

Once more, as the cry arose, and the mob became enraged at Paul, the chief captain came to his rescue. He feared that they might pull him in pieces, so he commanded the soldiers to take Paul and bring him into the castle.

One can picture that man of God standing uncompromisingly before the council, with faith in his heart. He was a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ before the very people who had proved to be his worst enemies throughout his ministry. Paul felt that it was a privilege to be in such a position. We can see that God had other reasons for Paul's going to Jerusalem than only to suffer persecution and trouble. Paul's going to Jerusalem helped to herald out the Gospel to the Jews, the Gentiles, the officials, and the common people. He wrote to the Philippians: "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Philippians 1:12).

The Lord has something far deeper than appears on the surface in His dealings with people and permitting them to go

where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

39 But Paul said, I am a man *which am* a Jew of Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

Acts 22:1-30

1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence *which I make* now unto you.

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

3 I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *and* taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

through trials. Sometimes the sufferings of God's people cause sinners to see the power of God, and may even bring them to salvation.

"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." The words of the Lord, as He stood by Paul that night, must have brought great comfort to his heart. He had never had the privilege of walking and talking with the Lord as the other disciples had had, but Paul, too, had met the Lord Jesus.

The Conspiracy

A plot was formed by more than forty Jews who banded together under a curse saying that they would not eat or drink until they had killed Paul. But they did not take into account the fact that the Lord was on Paul's side. God sent a young man, a nephew of Paul's, to reveal this secret to him, and also to the chief captain, Paul's friend.

The Lord's Side

The enemies of Christ may set themselves against the real children of God; they may plot and scheme; their plans may be well laid and they feel certain of victory over those whom they hate. But the child of God need not fear or worry so long as he knows that the Lord is on his side, and he is on the Lord's side.

What God is seeking for above everything else in our lives is an absolute surrender of our will unto Him. Some people say, "There is nothing more for me to consecrate." But there is always a deeper consecration yet to be reached, where nothing is held back; and whatever comes to one, he will say, "Lord, have Thy way," and mean it. Trouble comes to everyone, but the question is: Are we going to try to steer the matter ourselves or let God direct our lives according to His divine will? Paul wrote, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice"; and he could speak that out of the depths of his heart because he had done that himself.

The Escape

No doubt something about Paul had awakened admiration and favour in the heart of the chief captain, because he was doing everything he could to protect and deliver Paul from the riots. He worked out a plan to get Paul out of Jerusalem by night in order to save his life. He prepared a guard of 470 to take Paul by night to Caesarea. There was a Roman law that a man could not even be held in prison without a definite charge against him upon which a trial could be based.

The captain sent a letter to the governor, Felix, telling of the riot in Jerusalem and the plans to kill Paul; but he said that there was no charge against Paul worthy of death or of bonds. He gave commandment to those who accused him to say before Felix what they had against him. Felix read the letter and commanded Paul to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

It is well for us to remember that even today "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (II Peter 2:9).

QUESTIONS

1. Which missionary journey was Paul making at this time?
2. Why did the people of God plead with Paul not to go to Jerusalem?
3. Did it have any effect? What was his reply?
4. Tell of the riot of Jerusalem.
5. Who helped Paul?
6. Tell in brief the testimony Paul gave as he stood on the stairs.
7. How did the people receive his testimony?
8. What is scourging? Did they scourge Paul?

4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.
5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.
6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.
7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?
8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.
9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.
10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.
11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.
12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*,
13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.
14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.
15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.
16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.
17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;
18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.
19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:
20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.
21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

9. Before what group of men was Paul taken?
10. Who helped Paul escape to Cæsarea? How?
11. Before whom was he to appear there?

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and *then* lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a *fellow* from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

26 When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free* born.

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from *his* bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

Acts 23:1-35

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

2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then 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?

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

5 Then 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.

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.

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him*, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18 So he took him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto *him*, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him* aside privately, and asked *him*, What is that thou hast to tell me?

20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves

with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

22 So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him*, *See thou* tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.

23 And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;

24 And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor.

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix *sendeth* greeting.

27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:

29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell.

31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris.

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:

33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia;

35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.