

## Through the Darkest Valley, I Fear No Danger

Acts 22:22-23:35

**vs. 22-30**, “He should not be allowed to live!”

The commander decided to take the matter into his own hands.

### Chapter 23

*Sanhedrin* -> a Jewish council. It was the supreme Jewish court. It made up approx. 71 men who met in the temple of Jerusalem, acting as a religious legislative body, trial court, and administrator of rituals.

**vs. 1-5**, The situation is growing in tension.

Good conscience

**1 Corinthians 4:4** For I am not conscious of anything against myself, but I am not justified by this. It is the Lord who judges me.

**Hebrews 13:18** Pray for us, for we are convinced that we have a clear conscience, wanting to conduct ourselves honorably in everything.

The High Priest gives instruction to strike Paul.

Paul uses his words to strike back.

Ananias' behavior was against the law.

He was engaged in the very thing Paul is being accused of, breaking the law.

**Leviticus 19:15** Do not act unjustly when deciding a case. Do not be partial to the poor or give preference to the rich; judge your neighbor fairly.

*Side Note*: Ananias' character and demise

- Ananias reigned as high priest from AD 48-58/59.
- He was known for his use of violence and bribery to get what he wanted.
- He was strongly disliked by Jewish nationalists for his pro-Roman policies.
- At the start of the war with Rome in AD 66, his home was destroyed and he was tracked down and killed.

Paul quickly gathered himself and apologized again by quoting the law, **Exodus 22:28** You must not blaspheme God or curse a leader among your people.

*Notice*: Paul showed respect to the office of leadership, not necessarily to the man in the office (Paul was very aware of Ananias' lack of character).

**vs. 6-10**, Paul through experience, wisdom, and the discernment of the Spirit knew how to read a room.

- Paul is strategically using worldviews and legislative difference to his advantage.

**vs. 11**, Have courage!

Your life will not end in Jerusalem. You are headed to Rome.

What does Luke want to communicate through the telling of this part of Paul's story?

1. Christianity is rooted in the Jewish doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.
2. The debate Paul is having is within the scope of Jewish thought.
3. The proclamation of the gospel to the Gentile world is a divine mandate.

**vs. 12-22**, Behind closed doors plans are made to eliminate Paul.

**vs. 16**, the son of Paul's sister.

**Question**: What does it mean for you to be a person of initiative? Is this a normal part of your life experience? Are you quick to make things right?

**vs. 23-35**, We are moving Paul. We are taking him to Felix the governor.

- Grand display of strength.
- 40 men who have made a vow are no match for 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen.
- Claudius Lysias' version of the story made him look good. "We discovered Paul is a Roman citizen and we rescued him."
- The main issue is a Jewish issue (their law).
- Passing the problem up the ladder.
- Paul is given a place of safety and is under the watch of the Romans.

What are some themes that we as the reader of Luke's narrative are supposed to be picking up on?

1. The Romans are protecting Paul, again and again.
2. God is in control through every detail and circumstance.

**Psalm 84:11** For the Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord grants favor and honor; he does not withhold the good from those who live with integrity.

What does this truly mean?

It doesn't mean that bad things never happen to good people.

It doesn't mean good people always get what they want.

But it can be relied upon as true.

It can be a principle that is used in prayer throughout life circumstances.

We can pray in faith and in hope, building on the truth of God's word.

If there is danger, help me avoid it.

If there is desire to do evil, may it be extinguished.

If there is temptation, give me the strength to resist it.

If there is a genuine need, let it be given.

Not my will, but yours be done. One earth as it is in Heaven!

Big Question concerning this life...

What is God doing right now in the middle of a chaotic and evil world?

Paul didn't have the exact answer, but he had the experience to know that God could be trusted.

- God had been pursuing Paul from the beginning.
- Paul had seen the glory of God through the face of Jesus.
- Paul knew and understood that Jesus was faithful to his promises.
- Jesus remains faithful to those who have kept faith with him.
- His faithfulness at times can be mysterious and surprising, but it continues to be faithful.

**Question:** Are you willing to trust Jesus even when you don't have a full understanding of life circumstances? Take time this week to ponder the faithfulness of Jesus. I truly believe you will be surprised at his continuous presence.