

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson #92

COMMENTARY ON: 22:23-30

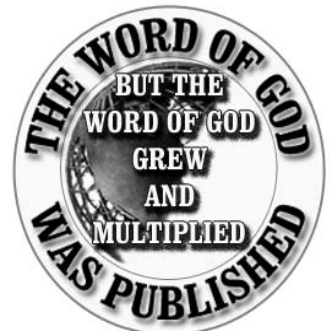
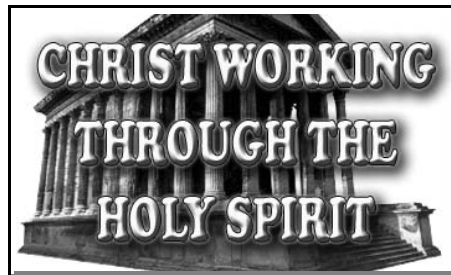
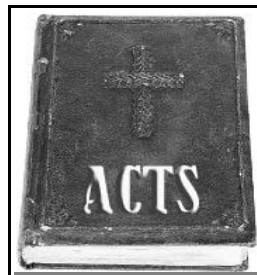
PAUL PROTECTED FROM THE CROWD

Once Paul has mentioned the word "Gentiles" in favorable sense, the Jewish crowd erupted in anger, throwing off their clothes in readiness to stone him, and throwing dust into the air. The captain of the Roman soldiers quickly removed Paul from the open place, and prepares to examine him by scourging. It is at this point that he learns Paul is a Roman citizen, and therefore could not be beaten until a valid charge against him was substantiated. Upon further inquiry, he learned that Paul was a natural-born citizen, and thus was in a more favorable state than the captain himself, who had purchased his citizenship. He then had the bonds removed from Paul, allowing him to wait for further legal proceedings without being bound. The captain was not willing to let the case go, because the tumult had been reported, and was now a matter of record. The situation had to be resolved satisfactorily, and the fact of Paul's innocence established. This will prove to be the beginning of a process that will not conclude until Paul is in Rome, where Jesus said he would preach the Gospel.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

"... and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ

The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 92



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED =Amplified Bible (1965), ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV =English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GNB=Good News (1966), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE= International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV= Literal Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV= Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster=The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----
LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

PAUL PROTECTED FROM THE CROWD

“ 22:23 "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 When 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 22:23-30)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT
Once Paul had mentioned the word "Gentiles" in a favorable sense, the Jewish crowd erupted in anger, throwing off their clothes in readiness to stone him, and throwing dust into the air. The captain of the Roman soldiers quickly removed Paul from the open place, and prepares to examine him by scourging. It is at this point that he learns Paul is a Roman citizen, and therefore could not be beaten until a valid charge against him was substantiated. Upon further inquiry, he learned that Paul was a natural-born citizen, and thus was in a more

favorable state than the captain himself, who had purchased his citizenship. He then had the thongs removed from Paul, allowing him to wait for further legal proceedings without being flogged. The captain was not willing to let the case go, because the tumult had been reported, and was now a matter of record. The situation had to be resolved satisfactorily, and the fact of Paul's innocence established. This will prove to be the beginning of a process that will not conclude until Paul is in Rome, where Jesus said he would preach the Gospel. It is also there that he will eventually be martyred.

HAVING A GODLY VIEW OF THINGS
There is a certain perspective of life that is developed in Scripture. This pertains particularly to those who are living by faith and walking in the Spirit – to those who are "in Christ Jesus." Life is not what it seems to be according to appearance. There are certain very real circumstances that provide the true context in which the newness of life is lived out. Here are some of them.
⇨ **THINGS ARE BEING WORKED TOGETHER.** God is working all things together for the ultimate good of those

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- THE TUMULT INCREASES (22:23)
- AN EFFORT IS MADE TO ARRIVE AT THE TRUTH (22:24)
- AN APPEAL TO THE LAW OF THE LAND (22:25)
- THIS MAN IS A ROMAN (22:26-27)
- PAUL WAS FREEBORN (22:28)
- AFRAID OF BEING UNJUST (22:29)
- CONFINED, YET FREE (22:30)
- CONCLUSION

who love Him and are called according to His purpose. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom 8:28).

- ⇒ **DEMONSTRATION OF DIVINE WISDOM.** The manifold, or multifaceted wisdom of God is being shown to heavenly principalities and powers through the church – that is, through expressions and experiences of the body of Christ "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph 3:10).
- ⇒ **BEING KEPT.** The Lord is keeping His people from falling. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 1:24) – keeping them by their faith. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet 1:5)
- ⇒ **THEIR TEMPTATIONS ARE MANAGED.** The Lord provides a way of escape that accompanies every temptation. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor 10:13).
- ⇒ **ORDERED, OR REGULATED, STEPS.** The steps of the good man are directed by the Lord. "The steps of a good man are

ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way" (Psa 37:23).

- ⇒ **GOD IS WORKING IN THEM.** God is working in His people both to will and to do of His own good pleasure. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13).
- ⇒ **THEY ARE BEING PERFECTED.** God is perfecting, establishing, and settling His people. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Pet 5:10).
- ⇒ **AN ADVERSARY IS STALKING THEM.** The devil is prowling about, seeking whom he may devour. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet 5:8).
- ⇒ **ANGELS ARE MINISTERING TO THEM.** Holy angels are ministering to those who are the heirs of salvation. "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb 1:13-14).
- ⇒ **THE HOLY SPIRIT INTERCEDES.** The Holy Spirit is interceding within us, expressing to the Father things for which we do not know how to pray. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:26-27).
- ⇒ **JESUS IS INTERCEDING.** Jesus is interceding for the saints at the right

hand of God. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25).

- ⇒ **BEING BROUGHT TO GLORY.** Jesus is bringing the sons of God to glory. "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb 2:10).
- ⇒ **IN A WORLD GOVERNED BY GOD.** The world is being governed by God through Jesus Christ "For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations" (Psa 22:28); "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all)" (Acts 10:36)..
- ⇒ **OBJECTIVES ARE INVOLVED THAT INCLUDE SUFFERING.** Needed trials are being experienced in order that our faith might be found to the praise, honor, and glory of God when Jesus appears. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:7).
- ⇒ **A SPECIFIED COURSE OF LIFE.** Believers are running a specific course that has been set before them. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2).
- ⇒ **FAITH IS BEING CULTURED.** The faith of God's elect is being tried in order that it might be a cause of praise to God when Jesus comes. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise

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and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:7).

⇒ **THEY GRAPPLE WITH HIGHER POWERS.**

Believers have been called into conflict with principalities and powers that dwell in higher realms. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph 6:12).

⇒ **HERESIES ARE FACED.** Heresies, or divisive doctrines, are faced in order to reveal the approved people. "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor 11:19).

⇒ **BEING CHANGED.** A continual change is wrought by the Holy Spirit, whereby we are being conformed to the image of God's Son. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29); "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18).

⇒ **REIGNING OVER THEIR BODY.** Those in Christ are given the commission of managing their body, together with its appetites. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom 12:1); "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor 9:27); "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5).

⇒ **PARTAKING OF HOLINESS THROUGH CHASTENING.** The children of God must endure chastening because they are the sons of God. This is not mere punishment, but becomes the means through which we become partakers of His holiness. "But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we

gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb 12:10).

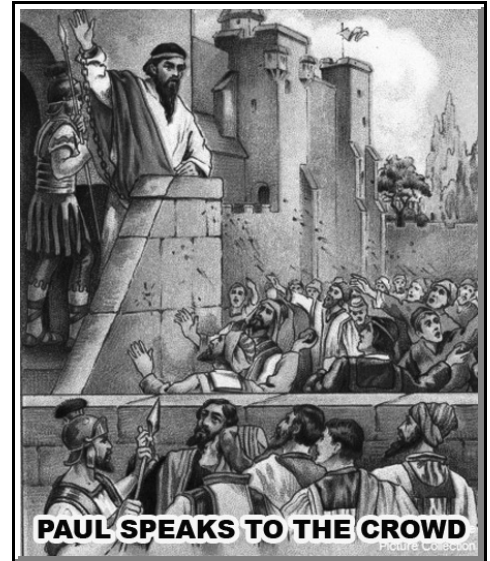
⇒ **MADE FUNCTIONAL.** Through edification, the saints are being brought to the point where they can function in the body of Christ, being themselves a source of edification. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph 4:15-16).

⇒ **GROWING UP WITH TARES.** To further complicate things, the children of God live out their lives with tares among them. As confirmed in the parable of the tares of the field, the wheat is not among the tares, but the tares are among the wheat. In spite of that circumstance, the children of the kingdom are brought to the point of productivity, or fruit bearing. "But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also . . . Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Mat 13:26,30,41-43).

These are very real objectives and activities, and they are not being accomplished in a moral vacuum. God has chosen to do these things in a domain that is competitive and hostile – "this present evil world." It is true that we have been delivered from this world (Gal 1:4), and yet we are being perfected and prepared in it. This is what necessitates Divine involvement in the process of salvation. It is unreasonable

to imagine that we could, in our own strength and of ourselves, overcome the enemies that held us captive before our new birth. It is He "that is in us" is greater than "he that is in the world." That is made quite clear in the declaration, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4),

We should not expect the life of faith to be simplistic, without challenges, and accomplished in a kind of coasting mode.



PAUL SPEAKS TO THE CROWD

THE POINT OF IT ALL

The point is that all of these things are operating behind the scenes of the event we are reviewing. According to appearance, the following were involved: Paul, a group of angry Jews, a Roman captain, some centurions, and at least one hundred soldiers. But actually, there were a lot of unseen powers and influences at work.

- ⇒ The devil and his hosts were at work within the Jews, and endeavoring to hinder Paul.
- ⇒ The Holy Spirit was at work within Paul, strengthening, comforting, and granting wisdom.
- ⇒ God was beholding Paul and governing the whole situation for his good.
- ⇒ From within, Jesus was sustaining Him and causing Him to stand.
- ⇒ God was controlling the captain, working things out for the good of Paul.

- ⇒ Holy angels were at work, subduing the enemies, and ministering to Paul.
- ⇒ Lofty heavenly personalities were beholding the wisdom of God in the

whole matter.

It is no wonder that Jesus admonished the people, *“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous*

judgment” (John 7:24). Much more is going on than what can be seen, and all who are in Christ Jesus are obliged to know it. For those who are living by faith, this is a wonderful thing.

THE TUMULT INCREASES

“^{22:23} And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air.”

AS THEY CRIED OUT

“And as they cried out . . .” Other versions read, *“were shouting,”* ^{NIV} *“wee screaming,”* ^{CJB} *“were yelling,”* ^{CSB} *“vociferated,”* ^{MRD} and *“furious shouts.”* ^{WEYMOUTH}

The words *“they cried out”* are translated from a single Greek word: *κραυγάζοντων*. The lexical meaning of the word is: *“to shout or cry out, with the possible implication of the unpleasant nature of the sound - ‘to shout, to scream.”* ^{LOUW-NIDA}

and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee” (Psa 73:22). In describing the state of men outside of Christ, among whom we all served our tenure, Paul wrote, *“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another”* (Titus 3:3).

Our text described people who are controlled by the flesh, shouting and screaming in anger and frustration like a wild animal that had been snared. Such a condition cannot be corrected by some kind of outward force. Thus we read of grievous plagues being poured out upon the ungodly, with a beastly response from them: *“and*

dominated by an unsound and erroneous mind. They forget that Paul had not been talking about himself, but of the Lord. The record of his words to them during this occasion are contained in verses one through twenty one. In them he developed a certain perspective. Test yourself to see if you can grasp the subject of his words.

- ⇒ He spoke respectfully to them, referring to them as *“men, brethren, and fathers”* (v 1).
- ⇒ He spoke to them in the Hebrew tongue, which was absolutely unique to their nation, because of their identity with the living God (v 2).
- ⇒ He told them he was a Jew like themselves, and had been raised in the strictest manner of their religion (v 3).
- ⇒ He himself, like them, was engaged in persecuting the way of the disciples of Jesus – yet he was even more zealous than they (v 4).
- ⇒ The Jewish high priest and leaders had honored his request for special letters that would authorize him to arrest and bring followers of Jesus bound to Jerusalem to be punished (v 5).
- ⇒ He was confronted by Jesus Himself on his way to Damascus as a light from heaven focused upon him (v 6).
- ⇒ Struck down to the ground by the majesty of Christ, he heard Him say He was the One Paul had been persecuting (v 7).
- ⇒ When Paul inquired who the personality was, he was told He was Jesus of Nazareth whom he was persecuting (v 8).
- ⇒ This was not a dream or a personal vision, for those who were with him saw the light, even though they could not understand the voice (v 9).

This is the kind of thing that happened in our text. Paul had declared to the people how Jesus had called Him into the most noble of all works. He had testified that he had been directed by Jesus to leave one place and go to another.

The idea here is that the people were seized with frenzy and carnal hysteria. It is as though the devil moved into them, causing them to lose all rationality and scream out like the beasts of the field.

There is a state where men become more like brute beasts than like *“the offspring of God.”* Brother Peter and Jude place false teachers into this category – *“as natural brute beasts,”* and *“as brute beasts”* (2 Pet 2:12; Jude 1:10). As used by Peter and Jude, this refers to the absurdity of the teaching of certain people. There is no sound reasoning in it, but their doctrine is the result of their own spiritually wild and uncontrollable nature.

When Asaph was disconcerted at the seeming prosperity of the wicked, he went into the sanctuary and had his thinking straightened out. In describing his former state of mind he confessed, *“So foolish was I,*

they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds” (Rev 16:10-11). Such a response is the result of a depraved and unsound mind. God Almighty had punished the people, and they had reacted by blaspheming *“the God of heaven.”*

This is the kind of thing that happened in our text. Paul had declared to the people how Jesus had called Him into the most noble of all works. He had testified that he had been directed by Jesus to leave one place and go to another. The direction was for God’s glory, the honor of Jesus, the illumination of people, and the good of Paul. What a marvelous thing that a man could be so favored of heaven!

And how did the crowd react to it all? They heard the word *“Gentiles,”* and suddenly they were filled with hatred, being

- ⇒ Upon asking what he should do, Paul was told by Jesus to go into the city, and everything he was to do would be told to him (v 10).
- ⇒ The person Jesus assigned for this work was Ananias, a man who was held in good report by all of the Jews (v 12).
- ⇒ Ananias delivered the message to Paul after first restoring his sight (v 13).
- ⇒ He told Paul that the God of the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) had chosen him, that he might know His will, see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth (v 14).
- ⇒ He told him that he had been chosen to be a witness unto all men of what he had seen and heard (v 15).
- ⇒ Ananias asked Paul why he was tarrying, exhorting him to rise up and be baptized, washing away his sins and calling upon the name of the Lord (v 16).
- ⇒ Later, when he went to Jerusalem, while he was praying in the Temple, he fell into a trance (v 17).
- ⇒ The same Jesus told him to leave Jerusalem quickly, for they would not receive his testimony about Him (v 18).
- ⇒ Paul recounted to Jesus how the people knew he had imprisoned and beat believers in every synagogue (v 19).
- ⇒ He confessed to Jesus that he had been there when Stephen, Jesus' own martyr, was killed, and that he had consented to his death (v 20).
- ⇒ Jesus then told him to leave Jerusalem, for He was going to send him "far hence to the Gentiles" (v 21).

Now, what was the focus of that testimony: Paul's will of the will of the Lord? Whose agenda had the priority: Paul's or that of Jesus? What was the preeminent work: what Paul did, or what Jesus did? Whose will was overthrown: Paul's will or the will of the Lord? Whose word took the priority: Paul's word or the word of Jesus? What was the real testimony about: What Paul was doing, or what Jesus was doing? Where did Paul's testimony end: with God honoring his will, or the will of Jesus? Who was Paul promoting: himself or Jesus?

Why did Saul of Tarsus yield to the will of the Lord, but the Jews now before him did not? It was because he had been living with all good conscience toward God, and they were not. It is because his zeal was really towards God, and their's was not. That is why Saul's mind was changed, and their's was not. It is why he believed, and they did not. It is why he submitted to Christ and they did not.

THEY CAST OFF THEIR CLOTHES

". . . and cast off their clothes . . ." Other versions read, "tore off their clothes," ^{NKJV} "throwing off their cloaks," ^{NASB} "waved their garments," ^{RSV} "pulling off their clothing," ^{BBE} "flinging aside their robes," ^{CJB} "taking off their coats," ^{GWN} "threw off their coats," ^{NLT} and "tearing their garments." ^{LITV}

This action was no doubt like that of those who stoned Stephen, who took off their outer garments, and laid them at the feet of Saul. It is written that those men "laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul" (Acts 8:58).

This text must not be viewed through Western eyes, as though Paul's accusers now stood before him naked. That is not what throwing off their clothes means. At this point it is good to remind us of the modesty that was cultured under the Law, but has not been abandoned for the sake of convenience. After sin had entered the world, Adam and Eve became acutely aware of their nakedness, and were ashamed – and that is **before** they were aware of the presence of the Lord (Gen 3:7). Even though the entire

from one of Noah's sons willfully seeing him "naked" (Gen 9:22), while his brothers refused to do so (Gen 9:23).

In the Tabernacle service, even a naked thigh was offensive to God (Ex 28:41-42). Members of a family, other than the wife and husband, were not to look upon the nakedness of other members of the family (Lev 18:8-19; 20:17-21).

When the Scriptures speak of someone being publicly "naked," it is not speaking of being nude, or without any clothes or covering. When, for example, David, upon the return of the ark of the covenant, "danced before the Lord with all of his might," he is said to have been "girded with a linen ephod" (2 Sam 6:14). Yet, when his wife Michal, said "How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself?" (2 Sam 6:20). For her foolish saying, she was cursed for all of her life with barrenness (2 Sam 6:23).

Another incident concerns Peter, following our Lord's resurrection. Following two appearances of the Lord to His disciples (John 20:19-29), he and some of the other disciples had gone fishing. Jesus appeared to them on that occasion, causing them to garner a miraculous catch of fish. When John recognized it was the Lord, he cried out, "It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast

Even though the entire human race consisted of but two people, they both made an effort to cover their nakedness, not knowing that the human body is, as some allege, beautiful. Even when they heard the voice of the Lord walking in the garden, they did not feel comfortable walking about with a fig-leaf covering, considering themselves still to be "naked."

human race consisted of but two people, they both made an effort to cover their nakedness, not knowing that the human body is, as some allege, beautiful (Gen 3:7). Even when they heard the voice of the Lord walking in the garden, they did not feel comfortable walking about with a fig-leaf covering, considering themselves still to be "naked" (Gen 3:8-10). One of the great curses in humanity resulted

himself into the sea" (John 21:7). This does not mean that he was "nude." The word "coat" signifies "an upper garment . . . a kind of linen blouse which fisherman used to wear at their work." ^{THAYER} Other versions reflect this meaning of John 21:7, referring to "his outer garment," ^{NKJV} "his overcoat," ^{DARBY} "his tunic," ^{M RD} "he was lightly clad," ^{NAB} "his fisherman's coat," ^{RWB} "mantel," ^{TNT} "his tunic (for he was stripped

to the waist),” ^{LIVING} “fisherman’s shirt,” ^{WEYMOUTH} and “his upper garment (his fisherman’s coat, his outer tunic).” ^{AMPLIFIED}

I have taken the time to briefly mention the Scriptural perspective of nakedness because of the loose manner in which it is considered in our society. It is important **not** to read the Scripture within the context of the average American life and circumstance. All Scripture, with the exception of Luke’s writings (the Gospel of Luke and Acts), was written by Jews. All of it was written with the Jewish culture in mind, together with the promises given to them.

AND THREW DUST INTO THE AIR

“... and threw dust into the air.”

Other versions read, “tossing dust,” ^{NASB} “flinging dust,” ^{NIV} and “tossed handfuls of dust.” ^{NLT}

tossed dust into the air. Like their own hatred, that very dust returned upon themselves.

There is a certain irrationality in iniquity that is arresting to consider. The further one is from God, and the more their opposition to His messengers, the more incoherent they become – particularly toward the things of God. They had been confronted by a messenger from God – one who was quite willing to share that marvelous message with them. This was not a message of condemnation, but one that announced that what God had promised throughout the centuries had now come to pass. It was a message of remission, justification, and everlasting hope. However, as marvelous as that message was, even allusions to it caused hatred to rise in the hearts of these people.

It is the manner of sin to grow

Judging from the popularity of recovery and improvement plans, one would think that the devil was actually honoring them, relinquishing his hold upon his victims. But the slightest inclination toward this imagination is turned in the direction of futility. Churches could not possibly be more wrong than when they adopt a man-made plan for recovering from sin. A plan is already in place, and no Divine allowance has been made for an additional plan, or an addendum to the one that is found in Christ Jesus. If, for example, these Asian Jews reject Paul and the Gospel he preached, no alternative plan will be presented to them. **Although men tend to think that another messenger may do better, there is no support in Scripture for such a notion.** If it can be established that God has sent a messenger to the people, whether it be Jeremiah to Israel, or Paul to the Asian Jews, if that message is rejected, things will only grow worse for the people.

It is the manner of sin to grow “worse and worse.” That is, the more men “resist the truth,” the tighter the hold of iniquity becomes, and the more dominant Satan becomes. Sin sets a certain degeneracy into motion that can only be aborted by “the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.”

Casting dust into the air was an indication of utter contempt, but of absolute frustration as well. When Shimei expressed his frustrating contempt for David, he threw stones at him “and cast dust” (2 Sam 16:13). There was really nothing else that he could do, and what is dust to a sword?

So in this text, even though these Jews were standing in front of the military barracks, they were so filled with hatred they

“worse and worse” (2 Tim 3:3). That is, the more men “resist the truth” (2 Tim 3:8), the tighter the hold of iniquity becomes, and the more dominant Satan becomes. Sin sets a certain degeneracy into motion that can only be aborted by “the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness” (Tit 1:1).

Sin is not neutralized by human effort, trying to do better, or entering into a philosophical program of self-improvement.

These realities are being lived out in this text, and the record is to be taken quite seriously. In our day there is too much allowance for the rejection of the Gospel, and refusing to receive the “love of the truth.” **When approaches and messages are adopted that have the smell of earth upon them, a departure from the faith has occurred.** When men attempt to mingle the presentation of the Gospel with the wisdom of men, and cater to carnal appetites, the truth falls down in the streets (Isa 59:14). Such attempts are really not in consideration of the lost, but are rather the clear expression of contempt for the Lord Jesus Christ, whether that circumstance is known or not. **They constitute a denial of Christ, because something is put ahead of Him – and He will not accept a subordinate position, for that contradicts who He is.**

AN EFFORT IS MADE TO ARRIVE AT THE TRUTH

“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.**”

The captain gives no heed to the shouts and antics of the angry mob. He knows that his charge is not to please the people, but to honor the government by

which he has been employed. Whether noble or ignoble, he acts out of a preference to be in the favor of Rome, not the Jews among whom he has been charged to maintain order.

This is in strict comportment with the rule of any government or military regime. An orderly government does not allow for the ignoring of the will of its head. How much more is this true of the

government of the Lord, who is “over all” (Rom 9:5; 10:12; Eph 1:22). If the captain has difficulty fulfilling his duty in the present environment, he will simply remove himself to a place that is conducive to that fulfillment.

What the Roman captain is doing for Rome, Paul is doing for Jesus. He is yielding to his Ruler, carrying out His will in the place that is most conducive for that

fulfillment. That is the manner of the Kingdom.

Through the prophet Daniel, God revealed that He would set up His Kingdom among men during a time of rulers who dominated the entire world. *“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever”* (Dan 2:44). Four successive empires were established that were global: Babylon, Median-Persian, Greece, and Rome. It was during the latter that the government of God was formalized in this world. **That government had always existed, though few among men discerned that reality.** However, in Christ that government is focused. It involves governing the entire world with a mind toward the elect of God, who are being brought to glory by the King. Although the world is hostile, rejecting the people of God, through Christ He will protect them, nourish them, and bring them to stand before His throne without fault and filled with joy (Jude 1:24).

Such a government is certainly not depicted by democracy. In this government, human rights and preferences are not the point, but the will of the Lord. This is a will that extends into eternity, not being limited by time. If one can see it, this is why great global empires existed – **to introduce men to the kind of rule that God maintains.**

THE CAPTAIN COMMANDED HIM TO BE BROUGHT

“The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle . . .”

Here again we see the authority of a man’s word. It is carried out immediately, and without question. This is the kind of word to which a certain centurion referred when he sought for help from Jesus. *“For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it”* (Mat 8:9). In his thinking, this man made an association of that kind of authority with the Lord Jesus. Therefore he sent word to Jesus, *“ Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed”* (Luke 7:6-7).

As noble and preferable as the

government of our country may appear, it does little in the matter of assisting us to comprehend the nature of the Kingdom of God. No small amount of theology reflects the culture of our place and time rather than the nature of God and Divine authority.

EXAMINED BY SCOURGING

“ . . . and bade that he should be examined by scourging . . .” Other versions read, *“flogged and questioned,”* ^{NIV} *“examined by flogging,”* ^{NRSV} *“put him to the*

When warring factions come together to discuss their differences, it may appear to be a noble effort – but it is not! Contention cannot be settled by discussion. There may be an apparent lessening of hostility, but the issue that caused the contention will not be resolved.

test by whipping,” ^{BBE} *“examined with the scourge,”* ^{CSB} *“scourged and tortured,”* ^{DOUAY} *“question Paul as they whipped, him,”* ^{GWN} *“interrogated under the lash,”* ^{NAB} *“interrogate Paul by beating him with a lash,”* ^{NET} and *“lashed with whips to make him confess his crime.”* ^{NLT}

It is clear from this tactic that the captain, Lysias by name (Acts 24:7,22), had not understood what Paul said in Hebrew. This being the case, **Paul was clearly more interested in reaching the Jews than in defending himself before the government official.** This provides us with a kind of index as to how Paul thought. It was **not** in a self-centered manner.

Now the captain endeavors to extract from Paul the reason for the tumult, doing so by force, or the infliction of pain. Flogging was not a pleasant process, and was designed to be so uncomfortable that the person with a guilt-ridden conscience would finally divulge the matter to be known. Of course, with Paul, there was no just cause for a tumult being raised against him, and he knew it. That changes the entire circumstance.

THAT HE MIGHT KNOW

“ . . . that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.” Other versions read, *“that he might know why they were shouting against him that way,”* ^{NASB} and *“find out the reason for this outcry against him.”* ^{NRSV}

In order to arrive at the truth of the matter, the captain first had to remove Paul from the area of contention and rage. That is not a suitable environment in which to learn the truth of a matter. This is because *“by pride cometh contention”* (Prov 13:10), and no good can come from pride, for God withdraws from such people. As it is written, *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look . . .”* (Prov 6:16-17). Pride is like a chain that encircles or confines

its victim (Psa 73:6). God will not suffer, or tolerate, the person with a *“proud heart”* (Psa 101:5). Because pride births contention, no good can come from it.

As regards this text, the truth could not be discovered in a contentious environment. The captain had to take Paul and withdraw him from that surrounding. That was the only way he could hope to arrive at the truth of the matter before him.

When warring factions come together to discuss their differences, it may appear to be a noble effort – but it is not! Contention cannot be settled by discussion. There may be an apparent lessening of hostility, but the issue that caused the contention will **not** be resolved. A classic example of this is found in the attempts of men to resolve the issue of divisions among professing Christians. Who is able to reckon up a reasonable assessment of the number of meetings devoted to this objective? And yet, I do not know of a single Christian faction in all of history that was exculpated by discussion. Often, such discussions actually result in further divisions. This is because the subjects of discussion always center in a human interpretation of revelation rather than revelation itself.

An Example

An example of this is found among certain brethren with whom I have had more than a passing acquaintance. It has to do with the acceptance of instrumental music in

the worship of God. This matter is an issue in several other denominations as well. One body of people say it is unlawful to use instrumental music in any act of reverence toward God, or any assembly meeting in the name of Christ. The opposing bodies contend there is nothing wrong with such a practice, and allow it without any form of condemnation. In the group; with which I am familiar, this matter has been debated and discussed for over a century and a half. It has never really been settled. Both factions still exist, continuing to compete with one another. However, if all discussions on the subject outlawed the expression of any human opinion, no matter how valid it may appear, and insisted on confining the discussion to express statements made in Scripture concerning instrumental music and how God is said to have regarded it, the entire character of the discussions would be significantly altered.

This, of course, is not the approach

that is taken, although both parties insist that they believe the Word of God. In fact, they do not argue about what God has said **on the subject**, but rather argue over what they perceive Him to have meant. The result – contention! And why is this so? Because men are not willing to let go of their own thoughts and words in order that they might embrace “*the good word of God*” (Heb 6:5).

Our Contemporaries Can Learn from this Roman Captain

There are some things to be learned from this brief account. It is like a mirror of greater issues regarding more profound realities.

- ⇨ Seeing contention for what it really is – an arena in which good fruit will **not** be produced.
- ⇨ Knowing **when** to leave the area of contention. When fruit is not realized, it is time to leave.

⇨ Getting at the truth of a matter, no matter what is required to do so. For the captain, this issue was driven by a respect for the Roman government, and a certain fear of being found tolerating something it forbade. For the believer, it involves the cognition of the will of the Lord, and a fear of standing before Him not having honored His will.

⇨ The sanctified process is one that targets the discovery of the truth itself, not the justification of a humanly contrived view of the truth.

While it is painful to acknowledge the presence of such a circumstance, there is not much evidence in our time of a genuine interest in the truth of God. As a result, Jesus ranks very low on the pole of practicality, and the salvation of God is not seen as absolutely essential. Too much room is made for the will of man.

AN APPEAL TO THE LAW OF THE LAND

“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?*”

Now they commence to prepare Paul for the examination by scourging. **It is**

to him whom he could ask for prayer. This is a trial he would have to bear alone, so to speak. If he was to be encouraged, he would have to do like David of old. As it is written, “*And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David*

to be an acceptable approach, but the Lord Jesus Himself is strangely absent from such plans. It is said of Jesus that He is NOT a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities (Heb 4:15). Of course, that is addressing the matter of **approaching** difficulties, or temptations. Not by coincidence, that is the precise circumstance in which Paul finds himself. Relying upon the Lord, he will be directed through this whole affair, knowing what he ought to do. In the midst of preparation for this beating, he will be characterized by a sound mind, wisdom, and boldness to speak the right thing.

If all of this seems a bit irrelevant, it must be remembered that this kind of scenario is not at all common in the American church. Stumbling and failure are occurring throughout the professed church, even though it has engaged in all manner of recovery programs – programs that depend upon suffering peers instead of a compassionate High Priest. This is not an innocent situation, and those feigned teachers who promote that kind of approach to temptation and suffering have drawn attention **away** from Jesus instead of to Him. I will wax bold and affirm that Paul could not have endured such occasions if he had addressed them with the methodologies

It is said of Jesus that He is NOT a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities (Heb 4:15). Of course, that is addressing the matter of approaching difficulties, or temptations. Not by coincidence, that is the precise circumstance in which Paul finds himself.

important to perceive the composure of Paul during this process. Scourging was a painful procedure, and some never did recover from it. For Paul, there could have been painful recollections of previous beatings he had endured, to say nothing of him being stoned at Lystra. For those who are unduly impacted by the past, the prospects of yet another beating could have been most disconcerting. Further, at this time Paul did not have fellow believers close

encouraged himself in the LORD his God” (1 Sam 30:6).

There is an approach to the difficulties of life that is being marketed in our day that does not emphasis believers building up themselves on their most holy faith (Jude 1:20). Those with what is referred to as “struggles” are actually taught to seek out others who have those same difficulties, drawing strength from them. It all appears

being foisted upon the church today. This will be confirmed by his conduct through this whole incident. We are being exposed to a man who is actually living in fellowship with Christ Jesus (1 Cor 1:9).

THEY BOUND HIM WITH THONGS

“And as they bound him with thongs . . .” Other versions read, “and they stretched him out to flog him,”^{NIV} “and they tied him UP with thongs,”^{NRSV} “they put leather bands around him,”^{BBE} “stretching him out with things,”^{CJB} “stretched him forward with thongs,”^{DARBY} “stretched him out for the whips,”^{ESV} “had Paul stretch out to tie him to the whipping post with the straps,”^{GWN} “stretched him out with thongs.”^{NAS}

Robertson says the literal translation is, “when they stretched him forward.”
WORD PICTURES The pictures displayed on this page show what was involved in tying Paul with thongs. These were used to stretch Paul out, so the totality of his back could be exposed to the beating that was intended to follow.



PAUL SAID TO THE CENTURION

“Paul said unto the centurion that stood by . . .” Other versions read, “Paul said to the centurion standing there,”^{NIV} and “the centurion who stood by him,”^{DOUAY} and “the centurion who stood over him,”^{MRD}

This was apparently the officer who was immediately in charge of the beating. He was probably to see that it was administered properly, and within the confines of Roman law. Notice the composure with which Paul now speaks, and the alertness that is evident in him. These are the effects of faith.

IS THIS LAWFUL?

“Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?” Other versions read, “Is it legal for you to

flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been found guilty?”^{NIV} “Is it the law for you to give blows to a man who is a Roman and has not been judged?”^{BBE} “Is it legal for you to whip a man who is a Roman citizen and hasn’t even had a trial?”^{CJB} and “Is it legal for you to lash a man who is a Roman citizen without a proper trial?”^{NET}

Paul said this AS he was being stretched out for the flogging. That requires an alert, sensitive, and cultured spirit. Even under great duress, he is able to recognize an opportunity – a means through which the Lord of glory can work. His faith had confirmed to him that the Lord sometimes uses earthly dignitaries to minister to His people. Pharaoh’s daughter raised Moses (Ex 2:5-10). Jethro, a heathen priest of Midian, ministered to Moses (Ex 3:1; 4:1-18). An Egyptian Pharaoh exalted Joseph from prison to the throne (Gen 41:41-43). Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus exalted Daniel to a place of political prominence (Dan 2:48; 5:29; 6:1-3; 28). Nebuchadnezzar promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, after recognizing God had delivered them (Dan 3:30). King Artaxerxes assisted Nehemiah in returning and rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem (Neh 2:1-9). Cyrus was used of God to restore the Temple (Ezra 1:2-7).

All of this comes under the general statement, “And the earth helped the woman” (Rev 12:16). It also confirms that the Lord is, in fact, “the Governor among the nations” (Psa 22:28), using whom He will to accomplish His purposes. He has been known to use worldly kings to chastise His people (1 Chron 6:15), as well as to bless them, as in the case of Joseph (Gen 47:5-7).

A word also ought to be said concerning God’s notation of injustice.

- ⇨ “Defend the poor and fatherless: **do justice** to the afflicted and needy” (Psa 82:3).
- ⇨ “By me kings reign, and princes **decree justice**” (Prov 8:15).
- ⇨ “To **do justice** and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice” (Prov 21:3).
- ⇨ “None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity” (Isa 59:4).

⇨ “Thus saith the LORD; **Execute ye judgment and righteousness**, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation” (Jer 22:3-5).

⇨ “Forasmuch therefore as your **treading is upon the poor**, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins: **they afflict the just, they take a bribe**, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right” (Amos 5:11-12).

Isaiah affirmed that the lack of justice indicated that truth had fallen in the street: “And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter” (Isa 59:14). Where injustice prevails, whether in America or in a nation that openly avows another god, it is because truth has **not** been faithfully proclaimed.

In our text, it is ironic that injustice was found among a people who had been cultured in Divine manners, while justice was carried by those who were not so blessed. The only way to account for such a circumstance is to recognize that God was governing the whole situation.

You remember that when Mordecai, Esther’s uncle, admonished her to go before the king [who was her husband] and plead for the Jews, he said, “For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, **then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place**; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esth 4:14).

There is a view of God that affirms He does not require moral conduct from the

wicked, or those who are not in covenant with Him. However, this is not the truth, as Scripture confirms.

- ⇒ Even though Abel was the appointed seed, Cain was held accountable for his injustice toward Abel (Gen 4:9-12).
- ⇒ The world of Noah's day had no covenant with God, yet was destroyed because it was given over to violence (Gen 6:11-13).
- ⇒ The Egyptians were punished for treating the Jews unjustly (Ex 7:4; 12:12).
- ⇒ The Amalekites were judged for their unjust treatment of Israel when they were journeying to the promised land (Deut 25:17-18).
- ⇒ The Edomites were judged for their unjust dealing against Israel (Amos 1:6-11; Mal 13-4).
- ⇒ Nebuchadnezzar was judged for not giving glory to God (Dan 4:30-33).

It is essential that all men be wise and moral in their conduct, for that is something the God of heaven requires. Although it is a much lower level than “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” there are just laws in the world to which men can appeal – such as Paul is doing in this text.

- ⇒ Belshazzar was judged for drinking from vessels that had been dedicated to the Lord (Dan 5:22-23).
- ⇒ Herod was rebuked for taking his brother's wife (Matt 14:3-4).
- ⇒ Another Herod was judged for not giving glory to God (Acts 12:21-23).

Those who imagine that the moral bent of a nation, or the flagrant disregard of the living God by its leaders, are of no consequence, need to think again. God is not indifferent to such circumstances – and they are a growing phenomenon in our country.

It is essential that all men be wise and moral in their conduct, for that is something the God of heaven requires. Although it is a much lower level than “*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,*” there are just laws in the world to which men can appeal – such as Paul is doing in this text. These are things described as being “*honest in the sight of all men*” (Rom 12:17; 2 Cor 8:21), and things “*approved of men*” (Rom 14:18).

When professed believers are guilty of things even the world rejects, they have fallen into deep sin (1 Cor 5:1).

THIS MAN IS A ROMAN

“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 When the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.”

Here again we see the Lord working all things together for the ultimate good of Paul (Rom 8:28). This will require the alert and intelligent involvement of Paul himself. God does not always work in the background without any involvement of the ones being delivered. Even a man with a withered hand is asked to stretch it forth (Matt 12:13), and a blind man was required to go and wash clay from his eyes at a certain pool (John 9:7). God's people must not be naive and overly simplistic about the working of the Lord. He has provided us with enough examples to form sound concepts of deliverance and help.

Noah had to personally build the ark in which he would escape the destruction of the flood, then fill it with pairs of all the animal species. Only then could he and his

family enter into safety (Gen 6:14-22). There are many records of military victories by the people of God that required extensive fighting (Ex 17:10-13; 1 Sam 7:11), and precious few where they were granted the privilege of beholding the enemy struck down without their personal activity (2 Kgs 19:35; 2 Chron 20:17-25).

The Israelites were required to do a number of things before they were delivered from Egypt. Even though that deliverance was described as them being carried out “*on eagles' wings*” (Ex 19:4), they did not literally fly out of the land of bondage. They walked out, carrying all of their possessions, taking their infants and little ones with them, and herding their flocks as well. Before they walked out, they had to kill the Passover lamb, put its blood upon the side posts and upper post of the doors of their houses, cook the lamb a certain way, and eat it with haste (Ex 12:5-11). There have been deliverances that did not require a lot of activity from the ones being delivered – like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace (Dan 3:20-26), and Daniel from the lion's den (Dan 6:16-27). But

even in those deliverances, there was some bold activity that preceded the incarceration from which they were delivered.

God's people are required to walk by faith. Only then will they be able to identify when they are involved in deliverances, and recognize the appropriate thing to do. Once again, all of this is being lived out in our text. **The book of Acts is not the record of heroes, but of those who lived by faith and walked in the Spirit** – things that are common to all who are in Christ Jesus.

WHEN THE CENTURION HEARD THAT

“When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying . . .”

Notice the immediacy with which this centurion acted. The beating was not carried out, but additional information was immediately conveyed to the chief military man. What caused all of this to occur? Was this merely a display of military subordination and due honor? Is anyone naive enough to think that this kind of

protocol was always followed? Pilate did not display such consideration when the Son of God stood before him, nor did Herod when he also was confronted with the Lord. While Roman law did provide a framework for such consideration, we are not told that it was always honored when dealing with the disciples of Jesus. Pilate did not hesitate to kill some Jews, mingling their blood with their sacrifices (Lk 13:1), and that certainly was a miscarriage of justice.

Once again, this was the Lord, causing the events to take a new direction in favor of His own apostle.

TAKE HEED WHAT THOU DOEST

“. . . Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. . .” Other versions read, “Take care what you do,”^{NKJV} “What are you about to do?”^{NASB} “Do you realize what you are doing?”^{CJB} and “Do you know what you are doing?”^{IE}

Even in civil law, there are occasions when a person occupying a higher position must be informed that what he is doing is questionable, to say the least. Thoughtless submission is not necessarily right. Even when there is no question about the necessity of carrying out the edict of a superior, if there is a sound basis for objecting, that objection ought to be stated – just as it was here. The truth of the matter is that there was some additional information that was critical to this, and it was not common knowledge.

I have been in academic circles, lowly by way of comparison, where this kind of liberty was not granted to the students. There is no realm in which the right to affirm the truth is out of order. Notwithstanding, I have been in church board meetings, where there was less of an interest in the truth than existed in the barracks in which Paul was standing. Such things ought not to be! In fact, God Almighty will use this kind of setting to deliver His servant.

TELL ME, ART THOU A ROMAN?

“When the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.” Other versions read, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?”^{NIV}

Knowing that Roman citizens were vouchsafed unique privileges, as is ideally true of every form of civil government, the captain at once set out to confirm if Paul was, in fact, a Roman citizen. Remember, at the first, he thought Paul was an Egyptian

(Acts 21:36). If Paul answers in the affirmative, that will change this whole situation.

You may recall that a similar

CONCERNING ROMAN LAW

Cicero says that the body of every Roman citizen was inviolable. “The Porcian law,” he adds, “has removed the rod from the body of every Roman citizen.” And in his celebrated oration against Verres, he says, A Roman citizen was beaten with rods in the forum, O judges; where, in the meantime, no groan, no other voice of this unhappy man, was heard except the cry, ‘I am a Roman citizen!’ Take away this hope,” he says, “take away this defense from the Roman citizens, let there be no protection in the cry I am a Roman citizen, and the praetor can with impunity inflict any punishment on him who declares himself a citizen of Rome, etc.”

ALBERT BARNES, ACTS

The Valerian law forbade any Roman citizen to be bound. The Porcian law forbade any to be beaten with rods. And by the same law the liberty of a Roman citizen was never put in the power of the lictor. It is a transgression of the law to bind a Roman citizen: it is wickedness to scourge him. And the illegality of the proceedings of these magistrates was farther evident in their condemning and punishing them unheard. This was a gross violation of a common maxim in the Roman law. Many who are accused of evil may be absolved, when the cause is heard; but unheard, no man can be condemned.”

ADAM CLARK, ACTS, CICERO, Orat. pro Rabirio, Verrem, Orat. 5

incident took place in Philippi – except in that case Paul and Silas were actually beaten. Still not knowing that they had been dealing with Roman citizens, the political magistrates had sent word to the keeper of the jail to let Paul and Silas go in peace. Having heard the message Paul replied, “They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out” (Acts 16:37). As soon as the officials were told what Paul said, “they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city”^{NKJV} (Acts 16:38-39).

Note, Paul did not say he was **not** a citizen of Rome, but rather that he was a citizen of heaven – although that is really what he was. It is quite true that in this world we are “strangers and pilgrims” (1 Pet 2:11), having our citizenship “in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”^{NKJV} (Phil 3:20). **However, this was not the time to make an appeal to that unalterable fact.** This

was an occasion when Paul was standing before men who were fulfilling a God-ordained office, even as he did in Philippi. By Divine edict, worldly rulers are not intended to be a “terror to good works, but to the evil” (Rom 13:2) – and Paul had done no evil work. One of the primary purposes of civil authority is to “execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom 13:4). Not only had Paul refrained from doing evil, he had not conducted his life unwisely, or without giving due consideration to the civil laws of the land. He was not an insurrectionist like Barabbas.

While this was not a major area of Paul’s life, he was familiar with the laws of the empire of Rome, and could therefore use them appropriately. This was also a benefit of following the mandates of the King of kings, who inspired the following statements.

- ⇨ “My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change” (Prov 24:21).
- ⇨ “Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter” (Eccl 10:20).
- ⇨ “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor” (Rom 13:7).
- ⇨ “Honor the king” (1 Pet 2:17).
- ⇨ It is said of wicked people who feign themselves to be representatives of God, “But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities” (2 Pet 2:10). And again, “Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities” (Jude 1:8).
- ⇨ **The people of God are not to be noted for breaking the Law, despising government, withholding their taxes, and speaking against dignities.** This is because God is involved in the raising up of political rulers – even when they are not commendable people. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, “This matter is

by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: **to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men**" (Dan 4:17). The psalmist affirmed, "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: **He putteth down one, and setteth up another**" (Psa 75:7). God even said of the despot Nebuchadnezzar, "And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of

the field have I given him also to serve him" (Jer 27:6).

⇒ When the Lord was instructing Israel concerning the coming Babylonian captivity, He instructed them bring their "necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, and his people" (Jer 27:11). Even after they were carried away captive, He told them, "And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace" (Jer 29:7). All of this took place under the administration of the Almighty. In chastening His people for

their disobedience, He raised up Nebuchadnezzar, then later put him down for going too far.

When navigating through trials, there is no substitute for a knowledge of these things. **In our trials as well as in our blessings, we are being oriented for glory.**

In trial, we are being severed more completely from this present evil world. In blessing, we are gaining an acquaintance with an "eternal inheritance." In all of these things we are to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt 10:16). It is never right for the saints to be ignorant.

PAUL WAS FREEBORN

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

Roman citizenship was considered a privilege – particularly since Rome was ruling the world. Special privileges were given to its citizens, as is the case with every civilized country.

WITH A GREAT SUM I OBTAINED THIS FREEDOM

"And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom . . .". Other versions read, "I obtained this citizenship," NKJV and "I acquired this citizenship." NASB

The word "freedom" refers to political freedom which, in this case, is synonymous with citizenship. The Greek word from which it is translated is πολιτεία, which means "citizenship." Freedom, in this case, means free to advantage from the special benefits of citizenship. It is not a word that equates with license, or the right to do whatever one pleases. It is "freedom" as compared with slavery, being vassals, or someone in bondage.

I WAS FREEBORN

". . . And Paul said, But I was free born." Other versions read, "born a citizen," NKJV "Roman born," ASV "Roman rights . . . I had them by birth" BBE "a citizen by birth." ESV

Paul was not born in the city of Rome itself, but within the Roman empire,

which included the city of Tarsus, a city that operated under its authority, and was subject to its requirements.

THE PARALLEL IN THE SPIRIT

The language of this verse contains a wonderful parallel in the Spirit. Many practical aspects of the Christian life are now

TWO PARALLEL DOMAINS CITIZENSHIP REQUIRED

THE WORLD



RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES

CITIZENSHIP BY BIRTH OR NATURALIZATION

HEAVEN

ACCESS TO GOD
INTERCESSION OF JESUS
INTERCESSION OF THE SPIRIT
DIVINE DIRECTION
COMFORT OF THE SPIRIT
FELLOWSHIP OF THE SON
COMFORT OF THE SPIRIT
GRACE TO HELP
MINISTRY OF THE BODY
SUSTENANCE OF THE WORD

CITIZENSHIP PRIVILEGES IN CHRIST

BORN AGAIN

As the crowd grew even more furious, the captain removed Paul from their presence, and proceeded with an examination. – by Given O. Blakely

being represented as though they could be purchased from men who market their lifeless rules and disciples to the professing church. However, those who are in Christ have access to the Fount of all wisdom and knowledge, and it is their's for the asking. No person who is in Christ Jesus does not have these privileges, for they are part of the birthright of those who are born again.

Expressions of this Birth

Just as surely as Paul was born a citizen of the Roman Empire, with all of the privileges of that empire, so those who are born again have access to everything that is in Christ Jesus. Ponder the various expressions of this birth that are found in the words of Jesus and those who proclaimed His truth.

⇒ **CHILDREN OF GOD.** *"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called **the children of God**"* (Matt 5:9).

*bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is **born of the Spirit***" (John 3:8).

⇒ **THE SONS OF GOD.** *"But as many as received **him**, to them gave he power to become **the sons of God**, even to them that believe on his name"* (John 1:12).

⇒ **THE CHILDREN OF GOD.** *"And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one **the children of God** that were scattered abroad"* (John 11:52).

⇒ **NEWNESS OF LIFE.** *"Therefore we are buried with **him** by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in **newness of life**"* (Rom 6:4).

God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10).

⇒ **THE NEW MAN . . . CREATED.** *"And that ye put on **the new man**, which after God **is created** in righteousness and true holiness"* (Eph 4:24).

⇒ **THE NEW MAN . . . RENEWED.** *"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that **created him**"* (Col 3:10).

⇒ **REGENERATION.** *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of **regeneration**, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"* (Titus 3:5).

⇒ **BEGOTTEN AGAIN.** *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath **begotten us again** unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"* (1 Pet 1:3).

⇒ **BEING BORN AGAIN.** *"Being **born again**, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"* (1 Pet 1:23).

⇒ **BORN OF HIM.** *"If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is **born of Him**"* (1 John 2:29).

⇒ **BORN OF GOD.** *"Whosoever is **born of God** doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is **born of God**"* (1 John 3:9).

⇒ *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is **born of God**, and knoweth God"* (1 John 4:7).

⇒ **BEGOTTEN OF HIM.** *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is **born of God**: and every one that loveth **Him that begat** loveth him also that is **begotten of Him**"* (1 John 5:1).

⇒ **BORN OF GOD . . . BEGOTTEN OF GOD.** *"For whatsoever is **born of God** overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"* (1 John 5:4).

⇒ *"We know that whosoever is **born of God** sinneth not; but he that is*

Being born again constitutes one a citizen of heaven. Such a marvelous citizenship cannot be obtained any other way. It certainly cannot be purchased with silver and gold. In fact, the people of God are themselves purchased, and are citizens of heaven, being now "strangers and pilgrims" on the earth. Heavenly citizenship is now primary, and trumps all earthly associations.

⇒ **CHILDREN OF YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.** *"That ye may be **the children of your Father** which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust"* (Mat 5:45).

⇒ **BORN . . . OF GOD.** *"But as many as received **him**, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: **Which were born**, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"* (John 1:12-13).

⇒ **BORN AGAIN.** *"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3).

⇒ *"Ye must be **born again**"* (John 3:7).

⇒ **BORN OF THE SPIRIT.** *"The wind*

⇒ **NEWNESS OF SPIRIT.** *"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in **newness of spirit**, and not in the oldness of the letter"* (Rom 7:6).

⇒ **A NEW CREATURE [CREATION].** *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Cor 5:17).

⇒ **BORN AFTER THE SPIRIT.** *"But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was **born after the Spirit**, even so it is now"* (Gal 4:29).

⇒ **A NEW CREATURE [CREATION].** *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a **new creature**"* (Gal 6:15).

⇒ **CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS.** *"For we are **His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus** unto good works, which*

begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18).

There are thirty-four statements that affirm a new kind of life – a life that is begotten by God and birthed by His power. Every description of it is precise and without ambiguity.

- ⇒ It is the result of God’s own work.
- ⇒ It is new and not part of the natural order.
- ⇒ It involves a new image and new capacities.
- ⇒ It is related to the work of the Spirit.
- ⇒ It is associated with purity, or washing.
- ⇒ It is associated with not sinning.
- ⇒ It is associated with overcoming the world.
- ⇒ It is related to the love of the brethren.
- ⇒ It is an absolute necessity.
- ⇒ It is associated with believing Jesus is the Christ.
- ⇒ It is associated with righteousness and holiness.
- ⇒ It is associated with a walk, or manner of life.
- ⇒ It is a new creation.
- ⇒ It is a regeneration: i.e. a new lineage and a new kind of life.

Being born again constitutes one a citizen of heaven. Such a marvelous citizenship cannot be obtained any other way. It certainly cannot be purchased with silver and gold. In fact, the people of God are themselves purchased (1 Cor 6:20), and are citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20-21), being now *“strangers and pilgrims”* on the earth (1 Pet 2:11). Heavenly citizenship is now primary, and trumps all earthly associations.

THE RIGHTS OF HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

In Christ Jesus we have all of the

All of these things are related to heavenly citizenship, and are rights that are vouchsafed to those so described. They are a classic commentary of what it means to be “complete” in Christ (Col 2:10).

rights of heavenly citizenship. These rights are extensive and thorough. Nothing that is required for life and godliness can be acquired from any other source – it is all found in our identity with heaven (2 Pet 1:3). Ranking high on those privileges are access to God (Eph 3:12), an Intercessor in heaven (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25), and an Intercessor within (Rom 8:26-27). In Christ we are authorized, so to speak, to *“come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb 4:16). *“All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,”* hidden in Christ, are available to all of the citizens (Col 2:3). *“Every good and perfect gift”* comes down from the homeland (James 1:17).

All of the citizens of heaven are born free. They are free to come to God (Heb 10:22), free to resist the devil (James 4:7), and free to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul (1 Pet 2:11). They are no longer debtors to the flesh, to fulfill its lusts (Rom 8:12). They are no longer the servants of sin (Rom 6:17), for they have been *“made free from sin”* (Rom 6:18). They are free from the encumbrances of *“the law of sin and death”* (Rom 8:2). Further, Christ has made us free *“for freedom”*^{NASB} (Gal 5:1).

Those who hawk methods, techniques, and plans for recovery are blotches on the landscape of spiritual life. They are not telling the truth when they ascribe recovering power and stabilizing effects to their plans. All of their plans have come from the earth, which is the land of bondage. When they belch out claims of secret sources of strength and victory that can only be found in their manuals, they have lied to us. The citizens of heaven have not been shorted in any aspect of life.

There are a variety of things being said within the Christian community today that are a reproach to Christ. Things are being assigned a **primary** role in spiritual life that have not been given that designation

by the living God. Some are teaching that obedience is the key. Others affirm that prayer is the secret. Still other say that living in a continual state of brokenness is the means by which we tap into Divine power. Some are teaching that the secret to a strong spiritual life is fasting. The new false teachers are saying that being familiar with our Jewish roots is the key factor. Some are saying that knowing the Greek language is the guarantee of understanding the Scriptures. There are even those who say witnessing is the thing that causes spiritual life to mature.

The thing that all of these approaches have in common is the minimization of faith. Even though grace is said to be accessed *“through faith”* (Eph 2:8), these spiritual merchants have plans that can get grace by other means. In spite of the clear declaration that faith *“is the victory that overcometh the world”* (1 John 5:4), the cause for victory is being ascribed to other things. The Spirit witnesses that *“without faith it is impossible to please God”* (Heb 11:6). It does not say without these other things it is impossible to please God. And why not? Because faith encompasses and superintends all of the essentials. It is only as you obey, pray, fast, etc. **by faith** that any of those activities are even valid. None of them are an end of themselves. None of them make you a child of God, for we are *“all the children of God by faith”* (Gal 3:26). None of them can justify, for we are *“justified by faith”* (Rom 5:1). In fact, *“whatsoever is not of faith is sin”* (Rom 14:23). We *“live by faith”* (Rom 1:17), stand *“by faith”* (2 Cor 1:24), *“walk by faith”* (2 Cor 5:7), and our hearts are *“purified by faith”* (Acts 15:9).

All of these things are related to heavenly citizenship, and are rights that are vouchsafed to those so described. They are a classic commentary of what it means to be *“complete”* in Christ (Col 2:10). *“Complete”* means nothing is lacking in Christ. No needed resource can be found apart from Him.

AFRAID OF BEING UNJUST

“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.”

Upon hearing that Paul is a Roman citizen, the whole circumstance is altered. One minute he is being prepared to be beaten, and the next he is freed. Again, this is God working all things together for the good of Paul. He not only emboldens Paul, granting him wisdom to speak appropriately, but turns the heart of the captain. No further proof is required than the testimony of Paul himself. How could that have taken place without the management of the Lord? Before this point, the word of Paul had not

“Instantly those who were about to examine and flog him withdrew from him.”^{AMPLIFIED}

Remember what was about to happen. Paul was going to be examined by flogging. That is, he was going to be beaten until he submitted a satisfactory answer to the captain concerning what had taken place. He had been tied up, and the administrators of the flogging were ready to begin their grisly work. Yet, immediately they withdraw because of enlightenment concerning the situation before them. The next phrase suggests they were directed by the captain to do this, but the immediacy of their response is the thing to be noted. It indicates a situation that was being governed by the Lord, even though those involved were not aware of it.

only knew that Paul was a Roman citizen, he also knew that he himself had broken the law in having Paul bound with chains. That was something worthy of fear, for the Romans did not tolerate insubordination or their officials to be ignorant of the law and how they were applying it.

Admittedly, these circumstances sound strange to our culture, for it is one in which insubordination is tolerated and serious errors are overlooked.

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

This same kind of reaction was addressed in a word delivered to Israel. When they prepared to enter into Canaan to possess it, God gave them this word: *“Rise, ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land: begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle. This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee”* (Deu 2:24-25). In this instance, the fear and dread was provoked by the keen awareness that God Almighty stood with Israel. With the captain of our text, the fear was of the Roman officials – yet it was sufficient to provoke a change in his conduct.

When men are as earnest about obtaining a knowledge of the truth that makes men free as this captain was about learning the truth about the Jewish allegations, the truth will soon be found.

been sufficient. Paul had already told the captain that he was a citizen of Tarsus, which was under the dominion of Rome (21:39). Now, however, the matter seemed perfectly clear to the captain, and it was upon the word of Paul that it was established. The Lord had turned the heart of that man!

THEY DEPARTED FROM HIM

“Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him . . .” Other versions read, *“those who were about to examine him withdrew,”^{NKJV}* *“immediately let go of him,”^{NASB}* *“those who were about to question him withdrew immediately,”^{NIV}* *“those who were about to put him to the test went away,”^{BBE}* and

THE CHIEF CAPTAIN WAS AFRAID

“. . . and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.” Other versions read, *“the commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains,”^{NIV}* and *“the commandant also was frightened, for he realized that [Paul] was a Roman citizen and he had put him in chains.”^{AMPLIFIED}*

Note that this is something the captain “knew” – and his knowledge was purely upon the testimony of Paul. Paul had submitted no documents, nor had he called for a lawyer, or someone of note who could testify to the truth of what he said. Yet, upon the basis of his testimony the captain not

One dreadful thing that a carnal church does is this: **it removes any notion of such a body of people being identified with the Lord of glory.** This is precisely why political officials are not afraid to conduct themselves in opposition to the Word of the Lord, and look with disdain upon the law of the Lord. Should these people ever be convinced of God’s identity with believers, it would alter the landscape of society. However, when the professed church conducts itself in contrariety to the God they profess to worship, the ungodly become more bold in their opposition.

CONFINED, YET FREE

“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.”

The fear of the captain did not provoke him to drop the case. He rather approached it in a different manner. Keeping order in Jerusalem was his charge, and he

could not get away from that duty. However, in the doing of it, he could not work in violation of the law of the land.

THE CERTAIN WHEREOF HE WAS ACCUSED

“On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews . . .” Other versions read, *“wanted to know for certain why he was accused of the Jews,”*^{NKJV} *“find out exactly why Paul was being accused,”*^{NIV} and *“know the real reason why the Jews accused him.”*^{RSV}

This captain was carrying out his duty, part of which was knowing the reason for the tumult. He sensed he had not been exposed to all of the facts needed to make a sound judgment. He also knew that he was not at liberty to force Paul to divulge the reason by having him whipped. Therefore, within the constraints of the law, he now makes an effort to get at the truth.

An Application

We have an example here of some of the involvements in seeking to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. The quest for truth must be accomplished within a lawful environment. **A person, for example, who seeks the truth while living in contradiction of it, is engaged in a vain quest.** Men may tritely say that an immoral person is seeking the truth. That, however, is virtually impossible to confirm, for it violates everything we know about the revelation of truth. The acknowledgment of the truth, for example, **must** be preceded by repentance, which is *“to the acknowledging of the truth”* (2 Tim 2:25).

When men are as earnest about obtaining a knowledge of the truth that makes men free as this captain was about learning the truth about the Jewish allegations, the truth will soon be found.

HE LOOSED HIM FROM HIS BANDS

“ . . . he loosed him from his bands . . .” Other versions read, *“released him from his bonds”*^{NKJV}

The loosing took place the next day – *“on the morrow.”* Paul was, then, kept prisoner over the night. This was no doubt because of the Jews, who were raging with hatred. In this case, remaining a prisoner was for his safety.

While the chains that had been placed upon him had remained, apparently the thongs with which he had been tied were previously removed, for they applied exclusively to him being examined by flogging. Paul was a prisoner, but like Joseph, he was not an oppressed one.

A FAIR HEARING WILL TAKE PLACE

“ . . . and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.” Other versions read, *“the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin,”*^{NIV} and *“the chief priests and the entire council.”*^{NRSV}

To this point, the *“chief priests”* and *“council”* have not been mentioned in association with this case. In fact, this is the first mentioning of *“the chief priests”* since Acts 9:21, and the first time *“the council”* is mentioned since Acts 6:15. Originally this tumult was stirred up by *“the Jews which*

were of Asia,” who had *“stirred up all the people”* (21:27). It is not made known whether or not this included all the chief priests and council, although that was quite possible. The *“chief priests”* were identified with the Temple, and were probably present at the time the tumult started. The *“council”* had to be convened, for they did not travel about in company with one another.

This gathering was an official one, convened to arrive at the truth concerning allegations brought against Paul. Apparently the captain assumed they would be knowledgeable of the situation.

Even the world senses the need for being reasonable. It is surely uncomely for any form of unreasonableness to be found among those professing allegiance to God, including *“the Jew first, and also the Greek.”*

A Prisoner, Yet Free

And thus we have Paul depicted as a prisoner who is free. What a perspective! And yet, that is precisely how the believer is set forth in Scripture. Concerning servitude to sin and the flesh, those in Christ have been set free. No allegiance is owed to the flesh. Yet, from another perspective, we groan under the weight of mortality, crying out, *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”* (Rom 7:24). In a sense, we are trapped in a restricting and vile body. And yet, we are not confined there. We can take the wings of faith, and fly away, finding rest and solitude in Christ Jesus. Blessed are the people who know how to live under such restrictions, availing themselves of the rights of heavenly citizenship.

CONCLUSION

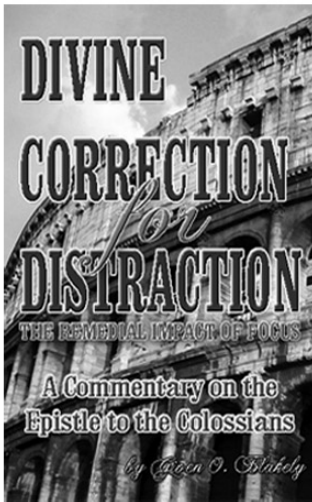
The sequence of events with which we have just dealt is filled with evidences of the hand of the Lord and Divine direction. This record is intended to bolster the confidence of those who live by faith. God can marshal earthly and heavenly personalities to come to the aid of His people. He can cause men to cease to beat His people, as He did when the Jews saw the Roman captain coming. He can empower his

servants to speak up in intimidating circumstances, as he did Paul. He can give those who are not in Christ an inclination to protect the holy people, as he did in the captain. He can give his servants wisdom to appeal to areas of right and wrong that are recognized by those who are not reconciled to God. He can cause an appointed beating to not be carried out. He can move an unbeliever to want to get at the truth of a

matter. He can cause bonds to be loosed by those who are themselves strangers to the Kingdom of God.

In these, and other, ways, we see how the Lord works all things together for the good of those who love Him and are the called according to His purpose. Faith takes hold of these realities and triumphs over the world, doing so in the midst of opposition.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 2/12/10. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The ninety-third lesson will cover verses 1 through 10 of the twenty-third chapter: **“PAUL TURNS PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES AGAINST EACH OTHER.”** After being struck on the mouth by the command of the high priest, Paul discerns that one part of the accusing crowd were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees. Capitalizing on that situation, Paul affirms that he has been called into account because of the hope and resurrection of the dead. This alters the whole environment. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.



A New Book
DIVINE CORRECTION for DISTRACTION
THE REMEDIAL IMPACT OF FOCUS

This is a commentary on the book of Colossians. Brother Blakely is currently editing this book for publication. Consisting of over 1,420 pages, this volume declares the revealed approach to distracting influences, particularly pertaining to doctrine.

THIS BOOK IS SCHEDULED FOR PRINTING FEBRUARY, 2010
ALL PREPARATORY WORK IS COMPLETED, AND PRINTING HAS COMMENCED
THIS IS A TWO VOLUME WORK CONSISTING OF 1,420 PAGES

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THE WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves. Additional

Website for Word of Truth Fellowship: <http://www.forministry.com/USMOINDPTWOTFW>

WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>

BROTHER BLAKEY'S ON-LINE COMMENTARIES

COMMENTARY on Nehemiah: <http://wotruth.com/nehindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>

COMMENTARY on Hosea: <http://wotruth.com/hoseaindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>

COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>

COMMENTARY on Philippians: <http://wotruth.com/philippiansdindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>

COMMENTARY on First Thessalonians: <http://wotruth.com/1stthessindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Second Thessalonians: <http://wotruth.com/2ndthessindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Hebrews: <http://wotruth.com/hebindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on First Peter: <http://wotruth.com/1stpetindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on First John: <http://wotruth.com/1stjohnindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Revelation: <http://wotruth.com/revelationindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Mark: <http://wotruth.com/Mark.htm>

COMMENTARY on Titus: <http://wotruth.com/Titus.htm>

COMMENTARY on Acts: <http://wotruth.com/Acts.htm>

COMMENTARY on Malachi: <http://wotruth.com/Malachi.htm>

COMMENTARY on Galatians: <http://wotruth.com/Galatiansindex-new.htm>
