

June 14th Sunday 2015

Text: Acts 21:17 -26

Topic: Paul Arrested in Jerusalem

Some Jews from Ephesus and the surrounding provinces of Asia had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost (Acts 20: 16). Previously the Jews of Ephesus had fiercely opposed Paul (Acts 20:19). A few days earlier these Ephesian Jews had seen Paul together with Trophimus, a gentile of Ephesus (Acts 20:4). Now having seen Paul enter the inner part of the Jewish temple to purify himself, these Jews assumed that Paul had taken the gentile Trophimus inside the temple. They felt it is a big offence because the temple is defiled. If any gentile is found in this area, he is immediately sentenced to death. With this view, the enemies of Paul brought false charges against him; even though Paul is innocent this reminds us of the destructive power of false charges within the church of God. It brings sudden sour moments and breaks peaceful life to war. It is fertile ground for the enemy to plant all sorts of discord and disunity. Paul was seized by the Jews and dragged out of the inner court yard. This confirms the prophecy about Paul just as the Ephesians caused a riot for selfish reasons. The Jews in Jerusalem also caused a riot against him. The crowd tried to kill Paul, but the Roman Soldiers intervened on time. This is a lesson to our security agencies that are sometimes careless over their citizens. The Romans saved Paul's life, but they taught Paul had committed a serious crime and ordered him to be bound. This is another negative side of the security, bounding someone without questioning. The crowd despite the presence of the soldiers renewed their usual wicked call "away with him" let him be killed" 27 years ago the same was said to Jesus (John 19:15). Paul has defended himself by addressing them in Aramaic.

Lesson: It is known to us that people can create stories to back their false testimony to achieve their personal gain. This is evil and God detest falsehood entirely. As a child of God, fear God, do not give false testimony even if you will be rewarded, for the end result is destruction (Psalm 1).

Prayer: O Lord Jesus it is easy to accuse people, help me to always evaluate myself before I say a word.

June 15th Monday 2015

Text: Acts 22:1-21

Topic: Paul speaks to the crowd

Some of Paul's traveling companions were from Greece, therefore the crowd assumed that Paul would speak to them Greek language, but when they heard Paul speaking in their own language, they suddenly became silent and listened intently. Paul reminded the crowd that he was a Jew just like they were, and that he had been brought up in their own city in Jerusalem. Paul had received his training from Gamaliel one of the greatest Jewish teachers. Paul has also been zealous for God. He tries to convince them that he is a good Jew (Gal. 1:13-14; Philip 3:4-6) as portrayed in the above passages. He is not an enemy as some think of him. He persecuted the same faith those "following the way" that is Christianity. He mentioned how he persecuted them even to death (Acts 26:9-10). Suddenly things changed when Jesus appeared to him. He lost his sight and later regained it through the help of Ananias who told him how he

was chosen to the righteous one “Christ” and to hear words from his mouth. And that he will be his witness among the Jews and Gentiles (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8).

At this statement, Paul has received his appointment to be an apostle (1 Cor. 9:1, 15:7-9) as he always defended his position. He also narrated how the Holy Spirit directed him to do what. He preached primarily among gentiles on the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson: Let us not suppose that only apostles like Paul can know Christ in this way. We all, through the Holy Spirit can know Christ with complete certainty. Let’s believe that Christ can commission you to be his apostle among the unreached groups. Do you feel called but yet not certain? Pray and allow the Holy Spirit to reassure you.

Prayer: Lord Jesus I confess that your spirit has been prompting me to go out and share your word to people but I have not done this. Help me Lord Jesus to wake up and go with your guidance Amen.

June 16th Tuesday 2015

Text: Acts 22:22-30

Topic: Paul the Roman Citizen

The people had listened quietly attentively to Paul and as soon as he mentioned that he is being sent to the gentiles, the crowd went wild. In our previous reading, we learnt that the crowds were mad at Paul because they thought he had brought a gentile into the temple that is why as soon as they heard the word “gentile” their anger was rekindled.

When the commander saw the great anger of the crowd he brought Paul immediately into the fortress, since he did not understand the language to find out the problem and torture him by flogging. In Roman Empire flogging was like a dreaded form of torture because the whip was attached with some pieces of metal or bones at the end and this causes terrible pain and possible death. Paul has gone through this several times (Acts 16:22-23, 2 Cor. 11:24-25). But according to Roman law it is illegal to flog a Roman citizen even if he was found guilty in court.

In New Testament times it is a great honour to be a Roman citizens we can learn from Paul’s example that’s it is good to use our opportunity and our right to escape trouble. We should not be foolish when we have these opportunities. We should defend ourselves and brethren when we are wrongly accused. Today, we are deprived of our rights as citizens. We should therefore use these legal rights in appropriate way to defend ourselves. All Christians should put their faith in God not in people or judiciary for justice (1 Pet 2:19-23). It is bad to suffer for wrong rather let us suffer for doing good in this life. The commander doubted Paul’s citizenships due to his outlook and outfit, for it is possible to buy Roman’s citizen but the poor cannot afford it because it is expensive. Paul’s citizenship is by birth. This lead the commander to use the Sanhedrin to find out Paul’s problem.

Lesson: It is necessary for us to know that our citizenship does not matter to the opposite faith. The most important thing is that we are citizen of heaven and no one can snatch this from us. Even when we are ill treated here on earth, lets maintain our faith in Christ Jesus.

Prayer: Heaven is my place of citizenship, Lord Jesus grant me the grace to stand firm to the end.

June 17th Wednesday 2015

Text: ACTS 23:1-5

Topic: Paul Before The Sanhedrin

Paul said "I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day" How could Paul do such a thing? He had fiercely persecuted Christ's church. He had not only opposed God but had acted as God's enemy. The above statement signifies Paul's believe in fulfilling his duty to God. But what he meant is that he sincerely believed that in all things he had been fulfilling his duty to God. He had opposed Christ and the church but he did it with clear and good conscience (Acts 26:9). Even though Paul had in fact done great evil, his conscience had remained clear (Acts 24:16). Paul's confidence is not in his own righteousness, but his confidence in Christ's righteousness which he had appropriated by faith (Philip 3:9). Even though our conscience is clear it does not justify us in God's sight. Paul wrote to the Corinthians saying "My conscience is clear" but that does not make him innocent. It is the Lord who judges him (I Cor 4:4). Very often we like Paul, we may think we are doing good, but in fact, we are doing evil. Our conscience is clear, but it has misled us, God will also judge us for the evil we have done ignorantly.

Paul in his defense thinks of convincing the crowd but Ananias took offence and ordered that Paul be slapped. This man is known to be corrupt and wicked, a high priest who ruled between 47 to 58 AD said, though this action is illegal he could not be charged until found guilty. Not knowing that he is the high priest, Paul described him as white wash wall, a wall looking New and strong but from outside, is weak and decaying. This is what Jesus called the Jewish Leaders (Matt 23:27), they appeared good but inside they are wicked, evil and corrupt. This is common among today's leaders in both secular and the religious circle. They indeed look good from outside, but are corrupt and evil to their followers. They will not go unpunished, are you part of this? It is better you repent. Paul's reaction was to defend himself, he did not know that he is the high Priest.

Lesson: From the above lesson we can learn that there are times when we must speak out openly against evil men (Mark 13:11). But at other times it is better for us to remain silent (Mark 14:60-61, 15:3-5, 1 Peter 2:23) let the Holy Spirit guide us.

Prayer: Lord Jesus in every circumstance I found myself, direct me on what to do and grant me the grace to obey.

June 18th Thursday 2015

Text: Acts 23:6-11

Topic: Differences Among the Crowd

The Jews were divided into two main parties, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Sadducees always tried to keep on good terms with Romans authorities. They always opposed any preacher like Paul who stirred up the people, which resulted in public disturbance and might displease the Romans. Ironically, the high priest belongs to the group of Sadducees. If there is any disturbance such high priest can likely lose their position. This prompted the Sadducees to condemn Paul. One of the main differences between the Sadducees and Pharisees was that Pharisees believed in resurrection of the body while the Sadducees did not (Mark 12:18, 24-27). Even before

the time of Jesus, the Pharisees believed in bodily resurrection. The Pharisees hoped for eternal life. Therefore, those Pharisees who became Christians believed that their hope had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:20). When Paul said that he was a Pharisee, he believed in resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees among them took side with Paul. This led to a major dispute between the two groups. The Pharisees see nothing with what Paul said. The effort of the commander is unfruitful since the Sanhedrin could not conclude the case.

Paul was encouraged by Jesus to take courage “I have decided to send you to Rome”. Paul remains a prisoner in Israel for two more years, but he knew that at the right time he would be going to Rome.

Lesson: In every situation we find ourselves we should not be discouraged. The Lord who call us to be His children will certainly direct us and keep us. There could be hardship, persecution, allegation and frustration but at the end we should be encouraged that the will of the Lord our God will prevail not the evil doers.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you have called and chosen us to be your children, we pray that your Spirit be ever present with us in such a situation like that of Apostle Paul. Amen.

June 19th Friday 2015

Text: Acts 23:12-22

Topic: The Plot to Kill Paul

It was common among the Jews to take an oath not to eat or drink until a certain task had been accomplished. According to Jewish custom, if the task proved impossible to carryout, the vow could be canceled. Accordingly, about forty Jews joined together and vowed not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. They told the chief priests and elders about their evil plot and requested their help in carrying it out. It seems that these Jewish leaders agreed to the plot. Since it would help them achieve their motive and aim of removing trouble among the Jewish community. God has always another door where all doors are shut, we were told that Paul's nephew heard about the plot and revealed it to the commander who decided to release Paul under his authority, but with a strong warning. We heard nothing about Paul's sister and her son. The young man thank God when the commander heard of the plot, he did not keep Paul under his authority.

If Paul a Roman citizen should be killed, the commander would be blamed for failing to protect him. This is different with our situation in this country; some of our military officers do not care much about the citizens as far as they are safe. But in the Roman time, such negligence may cause a lot to the officer concerned. The main issue in this passage is the zeal of the Jews for their religion. Today we lack this zeal, even when we know that we in the last days. We cannot sacrifice it a little time to go to Bible study, prayer meetings or go out for Evangelism.

Lesson: If this Jews can take an oath not to eat or drink until they killed Paul, what special thing can we do for our Lord Jesus Christ who is our future and means of salvation? It is a shame that we have not done anything remarkable for him!

Prayer: My Lord and Saviour give me the heart to take a project of faith to expand your kingdom.

June 20th Saturday 2015

Text: ACTS 23:23-35

Topic: Paul Transferred to Caesarea

The commander decided to send Paul immediately to the Roman governor Felix under cover in the night. He ordered 470 soldiers to accompany Paul so that no one would be able to kill him on the way. Claudius Lysias a commander wrote a letter to Governor Felix describing the facts about Paul. But on one point he did not write the truth. The issue of citizenship was top on his matter and he came to know this when he directed that Paul be flogged. He failed in telling the truth which is expected of him as a man concur authority. It is the same thing with us today we are expected to tell the truth whether in good or bad times and stop looking for excuses.

Governor Felix, after reading the commander's letter, decided not to do anything about Paul until his accusers had come down from Jerusalem to make their charges against Paul. But he kept Paul securely in the place which King Herod had originally built for himself (Acts 12:1 19).

Lesson: If we are given responsibility to take care of life or property we should make sure that we truly take care and hand over the issue to the next authority safely like the commander did with Paul. It marks our relationship with the risen Lord who took responsibility of salvation seriously and died, until he is ask to hand us safely to his father.

Prayer: My father in Heaven, I pray that you give me the heart of taking responsibility of my family, office, and any other responsibility you have bestowed on me in Jesus name.