

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Acts 21:27-22:29 | Exodus 22:28 | Isaiah 43:2

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 10.15.23

SUMMARY

In what already appears to be a chaotic scene, chaos abounds all the more. Paul has been passed back and forth between the Romans and the Jews. The Jews wanted Paul killed because they believed he was uttering blasphemy as he preached that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had brought salvation to the Gentiles. To keep the peace, the Romans would flog him until they could figure out why Paul had the Jews—who had difficulty articulating his crime—in such an uproar. However, Paul’s Roman citizenship prevented him from being beaten without a trial. Therefore, the Romans dragged Paul back before the Jews, specifically, the Sanhedrin, the religious ruling body of the Jews, where the Romans might get clarity on what crime, *exactly*, Paul had committed. Paul begins his defense by noting that he has lived before God “in all good conscience up to this day.” The high priest, Ananias, was convinced, as every other Jew present, that Paul was uttering blasphemy and had Paul struck in the mouth for implying God justified his words and actions. In response, Paul insults the high priest, which is not something typical of Paul’s behavior as it was a violation of the law (Exodus 22:28). Paul, however, insists he didn’t know it was the high priest; nevertheless, his response reflected his exasperation. With the proverbial spotlight on him, Paul makes a comment that he knows will cause intense debate within the Sanhedrin, and in so doing, the focus turns away from him. As the debate raged on, even becoming violent, the tribune removed Paul from the area and sent him to the barracks. The chaos has reached its peak. A scene like this might cause anyone to believe that God is absent; where is God when all seems out of control? Yet, this is the moment the Lord stood by Paul’s side, telling him to take courage and continue his message of salvation to the Gentiles. Though chaos abounds, the Lord’s plans *will* prevail.

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of Acts 22:30-23:11.

After Paul was hit in the mouth, it seems reasonable that he would respond to the high priest by calling him a “whitewashed wall.” Does this seem inconsistent with Jesus’ command to “turn the other cheek” (Matthew 5:38-39)? Why or why not?

The Lord stood by Paul’s side and spoke encouraging words *after* the chaos dissipated. Have you noticed patterns like this in your life when you don’t hear from God in the middle of your trials but soon after? Why would God work like this?

If there’s one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today’s themes in what you bring before God.