

089 - Protected By the Lord - Acts 23:11-35

Call to Worship: 2 Samuel 22:4

Scripture Reading: Psalm 2

Sermon: "Protected By the Lord" Acts 23:11-35

Benediction: Hebrews 13:5b-6

I. The Lord Jesus Tells His People to Be of Good Cheer (11)

OR, more literally, to take courage or be brave

A. Greek *tharsos* means "courage" or 'bravery'; this word is the verb form *tharseo*

B. This is not a new command to God's people; what did the Lord tell Joshua when he was about the face the walls of Jericho and all the other dangers of entering the promised land to fight God's enemies?

Joshua 1:9 Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be you dismayed: for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

C. The Lord Jesus has renewed this command for His people, addressing particularly those times when we face tribulations

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

D. Consider that---the Lord Jesus has overcome the world

1. the outcome of this ordeal is not in question---the Lord Jesus already has the victory; he allowed the world and the devil to do to Him all they could do

- a. they sold Him
- b. they betrayed Him
- c. they slandered Him
- d. they condemned Him
- e. they mocked Him
- f. they tortured Him
- g. they killed Him

yet he rose from the dead, triumphant over the devil and all his demons, the world, death and the grave

2. now you are in Him, and under His protection, so no weapon formed against you can stand

E. The Lord has work for you to do, so be courageous and do it

1. Paul must testify in Rome
2. The church must maintain the truth and preach it to the whole world
3. You individually must live the Christian life, and worship the Lord, and tell the good news of Jesus Christ whenever you can
4. You will do the Lord's will for as long as He allows, then you will depart this

sinful world and go to be with Him

5. So take courage and serve the Lord, not fearing anything man can do to you!

II. Meanwhile, the Enemies of Christ Conspire Against His People (12-15)

A. In this case, 40 zealots swore an outrageous oath not to eat or drink until they killed Paul, and the ruling council supported this plot

B. It is an interesting phenomenon that one can observe other places in the scriptures, in more modern history, and in the world today

1. there is a ruler or ruling council that is not above robbery and murder, but might not commit the crimes himself, for fear of looking bad

2. men who are ambitious to gain the approval of the king or the council commit the crimes for him with great zeal

C. You know that this is a government conspiracy we are reading about here, and there are others in the scriptures

1. Queen Jezebel conspired with the city council to murder Naboth

2. King David conspired with his palace guards and with General Joab to commit adultery with Bathsheba and murder her husband Uriah

3. The satraps of Babylon conspired to get the King to kill Daniel

4. The bible does not teach us to believe every conspiracy theory

5. But the bible teaches us that the nations rage against God and against His Christ, and shows us that much of that raging is carried on as government officials conspire with each other within governments to harm the righteous

III. The Lord Jesus Christ Protects His People (16-35)

A. The Lord has many ways to protect His people

B. In this case the Lord protects Paul by the right functioning of two of His own institutions

1. The Lord protects Paul by using Paul's own family (16)

a. We don't know much about Paul's family, except that his father was a Pharisee

b. But here we meet Paul's nephew, whom God uses to inform the Roman government official about the Jews' plot to murder Paul

c. Interestingly, we have information about two other people in Paul's family

Romans 16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

i. Christians before Paul, and noteworthy ones

ii. imprisoned in Rome for the sake of the gospel

d. The Lord God Himself created the family, when He created the world and mankind in it

e. The Lord had said that one of the blessings of family is that relatives can stand together against their enemies (Ps 127:5)

2. The Lord protects Paul by using the civil government (23)

- a. We already know from our own experience that no civil government is perfect; all are corrupt to some degree, and many are very corrupt
- b. We know from what we read before that this chiliarch is corrupt enough that he thinks it a good idea to presume a prisoner is guilty, and flog him to get him to confess his crimes
- c. We read in this account that he is also corrupt enough to falsify an official government report to avoid blame for wrong he did and to claim credit for something good he did not do (27b)
- d. Yet the civil government is something good, instituted by God for the good of mankind
- e. To whatever degree its functions properly, it is God's servant for good
- f. The bottom line in government is that the government officials who bear the sword should use that sword to execute anyone convicted of committing murder
- g. But the first step of reasoning from that bottom line tells us that if the government authority bearing the sword learns ahead of time of an attempt to murder someone, that government authority should use the sword to prevent the murder if possible
 - i. dialing 911
 - ii. witness protection program

This is just what the Roman chiliarch did in this case.

- C. When these institutions do not protect us, the Lord protects us in other ways
- D. In God's perfect providence, He sometimes allows us to come to harm in this life
 - 1. many times Paul was beaten, imprisoned, or in other ways abused
 - 2. many saints in the bible, and many more since, have been killed by God's enemies
- E. Yet even in death we are protected by the Lord; He has told us not to fear those who can kill the body, because when they have done that, they can do no more! The moment they succeed in killing us, we appear in the presence of the Lord in paradise
 - 1 Those killed by the Lord's enemies have a place under the altar, crying out to the Lord to avenge their death
 - 2. They are given a white robe to wear until their waiting is over