

## **ST. PAUL A PRISONER IN THE CASTLE**

**– SEPTEMBER 17. – ACTS 22:17-29. –**

PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST – THE MOB ENRAGED AGAIN – COLONEL LYSIAS IN PERPLEXITY ORDERS THE ROMAN SOLDIERS TO BEAT ST. PAUL – THE APOSTLE THEREUPON DECLARES HIS CITIZENSHIP – LESSONS FROM HIS EXPERIENCES – SUFFERING FOR CHRIST A MARK OF DIVINE FAVOR – BITTERNESS AND SELFISHNESS REACT UPON THOSE WHO CHERISH SUCH SENTIMENTS.

**"He is my Refuge and my Fortress; my God, in Him will I trust." – Psalm 91:2.**

OUR last Study left St. Paul standing before the mob and motioning for silence, in order that he might address them. Doubtless he considered his thrilling experiences well compensated for by the privilege of that moment – the privilege of telling a large concourse of his countrymen about Jesus. Promptly the Apostle preached Christ – that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah promised in the Law and the Prophets, that His sacrificial death constituted the Redemption Sacrifice for Father Adam's forfeited life and, incidentally, for all of Adam's children, who died under his curse.

Surely also St. Paul declared that Messiah was calling a spiritual class to be His associates in His Millennial Kingdom, and that shortly Israel and all the nations would experience the privileges and blessings of that Kingdom! Surely he pointed out the fact that this Gospel Age is the acceptable time in which to make our calling and election sure to the chiefest part of the Abrahamic Covenant – the spiritual phase! Then he proceeded to tell his audience about his missionary tours. He declared that many of the Gentiles were gladly

receiving this Message and giving their hearts to the Lord in consecration.

## **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE REJECTED**

But so strong was the Jewish prejudice that the mere mention of the fact that this great blessing was going upon equal terms to the Gentiles re-kindled the flame of hatred and violence; and their shouts and jeers rent the air. Perplexed at the situation, the Roman commandant concluded that where there was so much opposition there must be some cause for it. Thereupon he gave orders that the Apostle be whipped until he confessed what he had done to create such a tumult.

At once the command began to be carried out by the soldiers, who proceeded to tie St. Paul to the whipping-post. But the Apostle brought the proceedings to a quick termination by inquiring of a centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?" When the centurion heard the question, he reported the matter to the colonel, who came and questioned the Apostle. He took St. Paul's word for it that he was a Roman citizen; for to have made an untruthful claim to citizenship would have meant sure death as soon as the matter had been investigated. The Apostle was held a prisoner for trial.

## **"THE DARKNESS HATETH THE LIGHT"**

Matters are somewhat the same today, although on a different plane. A worldly person, on hearing some sectarian Christian animadvert against some one who has been preaching the true Gospel of Christ would be inclined to suppose that the Message must contain something very vicious, very terrible indeed; else it would not so arouse those who have outwardly so much "form of godliness." And if, as in the case of the Roman officer, an audience be granted, and the Truth be presented in the hearing of the worldly person, he cannot understand it.

The reason for this is that "the world by wisdom knows not God," knows little of His Plan, understands little of His Word; for its language is different from that to which they are accustomed. When then, after a presentation of the Truth, the worldly find bitter opposition and invective against it on the part of religious teachers – modern Scribes, Pharisees and Doctors of Divinity – we must not be surprised if they are the more inclined to side with those who represent popular theology – so-called "orthodoxy" – and assume that the true Gospel must be something very evil, because taught by so few and opposed by so many of influence.

Nevertheless, it is for God's children to take the Apostle for their guide, and to be faithful to use every opportunity to let the light shine forth, even though it arouse the bitter opposition, prejudice and persecution of darkness. Our Lord's explanation of the matter is that "every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." (John 3:19-21.) Nothing seemed to incite the Scribes and Pharisees of eighteen centuries ago so much as did the reasonableness of the true Gospel. The common people heard it gladly, unless intimidated by their religious rulers, and were led to doubt those who had been teaching them to the contrary. Hence the religious rulers were incensed against the Gospellers. "They were grieved because they [the Apostles] TAUGHT THE PEOPLE." – Acts 4:2,3,15-21.

## **LESSONS FROM THE APOSTLE'S EXPERIENCES**

St. Paul was suffering as a Christian – because of loyalty to the Lord and to His Word. He was not suffering because he had followed the admonitions of the brethren in going into the Temple; for very evidently the hatred against them in the hearts of their enemies would sooner or later have manifested itself, and they would have sought the Apostle's life, as on previous occasions. In this incident we merely see that the attempt of the Apostles to create a favorable impression toward the Apostle Paul and his work

amongst the Gentiles probably brought the matter of his arrest more quickly to the front than any other course would have done.

The Apostle was not ashamed of his sufferings; for he realized that they were endured for Christ's sake. Any individual should feel deeply pained at a public arrest and imprisonment as a felon, as a violator of the law. But when these things are experienced because of faithfulness to the Lord, because of following in His footsteps, such may well rejoice in the ignominy, rejoice in the things which otherwise would be shameful and detestable.

If therefore, in the Lord's providence, arrest or imprisonment or scourging should come to any who read this article, and they can directly or indirectly trace their tribulation to faithfulness to the Lord and to His Truth, let them not be ashamed. Let them glorify God on this behalf, rejoicing that they are accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ, and remembering that even thus also was it with our Lord Jesus Himself. He was placed under arrest; He was bound; He was scourged; He was publicly insulted; He was even crucified as a blasphemer against God. – 1 Peter 4:16.

Another lesson which we may learn from today's Study is that it is not wise to trust too implicitly the voice of the multitude. If we find the rabble shouting against any one, whether orally or through the press, we should not unquestioningly accept their verdict. We should remember the experiences of our Lord Jesus, the experiences of St. Paul and of the other Apostles, and recall that the multitude cried out, "Away with them!" The Christian whose mind is thus relieved of prejudice is the better prepared to judge wisely respecting whatever may properly **[R5942 : page 252]** come under his observation or criticism. Then, if he should have similar experiences himself, he will be the better prepared to endure them.

Still another lesson for us is that when undergoing trials and difficulties, however much we realize that they could not come to us without the Lord's permission, nevertheless we are at liberty to use

any legitimate means for our own deliverance – even as St. Paul took advantage of his Roman citizenship. God had provided him in advance with that measure of protection; and it would have been culpable negligence on his part not to use it, and to expect the Lord to deliver him in some miraculous manner.

How often we find in the pages of history that violence and unreason have been manifested in the name of religion and for the defense of various sects! How utterly foreign to all such conduct is what St. Paul designates "the spirit of a sound mind" – the spirit of reason, justice – not to mention the spirit of generosity, loving-kindness and tender mercy! As the sight of the foolishness and the brutishness of a drunken person should act as a great temperance lesson in every right-minded man and woman, so such a scene as this depicted in today's Study, whether recognized by our natural eyes or mentally seen through the printed page, should be a lasting lesson against anything so brutish and unreasonable. Let every instance of religious bigotry and fanatical violence speak to our hearts a lesson in the opposite direction, and fix in us resolutions that by the grace of God we will never be thus foolish, thus wicked, but contrariwise will become the more gentle, the more kind, the more Christ-like, as the days go by.

