

Acts  
 “Jesus” The Sequel  
**III.) Chp. 13-28 “Witnesses to the end of the earth”**  
*Chp. 18:22-28 The royal route to Rome (3<sup>rd</sup> trip)*  
**23:12-35**  
**“The royal road”**

**I.) Intro.**

**II.) Vs. 12-15 Risky road blocks**

**III.) Vs. 16-22 Relatively safe**

**IV.) Vs. 23-35 Moving day**

**I.) Intro.**

Having examined Jesus’ words to a discouraged Paul we begin to see the fulfillment of what Jesus said in verses 11 “*You must also bear witness at Rome.*” Paul, (like us) needed to not “**make the mistake of judging God’s overall plan for his life by the portion of it that happened today**” Corrie Ten Boom was found of saying, “*If God sends us on stony paths, he provides strong shoes!*” I’m a history junky, I love looking into the lives of people to see how they lived. The most fascinating part of people’s lives is not the destination but rather the journey. I’m always amazed at how God works in our lives through the most unlikely of situations. Most of us would prefer God to work things out along the lines of our agendas. Luke is going to show us how God was moving Paul from Jerusalem to Rome and along the way we will see the value in the journey echoed in the words of Augustine, “**Trust the past to the mercy of God, the present to the love of God, and the future to the care of God!**” One of the things God often reminds me of is “**It’s not where your going it’s Who you’re going with!**”

**II.) Vs. 12-15 Risky road blocks**

Vs. 12-15 Paul was met by the Lord and encouraged by His words at night. Luke tells us the next morning that some of the Jews “*banded together*” and took an oath to destroy

Paul. The words Luke uses are the same used by the city clerk in Acts 19:40 where he described the crowd that had shouted for two hours “*great is Diana of the Ephesians*” as a “disorderly gathering”. The words literally mean to “bind together like the twisting of cords.” In Acts 19:40 what was bound together was “disorderly and gathering” here what is bound together is “secrecy and conspiracy”.

We are told here that more than forty of these guys formed this conspiracy taking an oath to not eat or drink till they killed Paul. These 40 guys had great zeal but it was not according to knowledge as Paul says to the Romans. **Folk’s zeal and devotion prove nothing about what a person believes other than that they are committed and in this case they needed to be committed!**

Finally we are told that they had a well-executed plan and that those in high places were in on it! They thought nothing in their zeal of killing Paul, lying to the Roman commander and involving others in their plot to do evil. Think of this for a moment:

- **Forty guys committed to your destruction**
- **A well thought plan**
- **People in high places in on it**

What did Paul have to defend against this? **THE WORD OF THE LORD THAT HE WAS STANDING BY HIM!** Have you ever felt like that? That the whole world is against you? I mean it seems that everybody and everything has committed it’s self to your destruction and failure.

I love this story: As soon as Paul hears the encouraging words of the Lord to trust in Jesus to fulfill His promise to Paul, it is put to the test. Paul is helpless, there is nothing

he can do to save himself from certain death, and in fact Paul doesn't even know that all this is happening.

Folks stop and think of this a moment, 40 people have committed themselves secretly to your destruction. They are so committed that they have sworn an oath to God not to eat or drink until they kill you. This was a suicide mission on their part and they don't care! They have a well thought out plan they have people in high places that will help them accomplish their goal. I bet the odds were 100 to 1 that Paul was a dead man. Paul had already watched his ship sink but the difference here is **IT'S NOT PAULS' SHIP IT'S THE LORD'S.**

### **III.) Vs. 16-22 Relatively safe**

Vs. 16 Folk's notice that after Jesus' promise to Paul when he was all alone that something radically changes as the Lord is directing the affairs of Paul's life. We are told that God prepared "*Paul's sister's son*" to watch out for him. Prior to this all we knew about Paul's family was that his dad was a Pharisee from Tarsus (verses 6). Suddenly Luke tells us that Paul's nephew foils the plot against him by overhearing their conversation. *Don't you just love coincidences?* God had placed this young man right where he wanted him and he uses him to tell Paul of the plan to kill him. At this moment you could say that Paul was "**relatively safe**"!

Hey wait a cotton pick'n minute, "*Where was God when Paul was first beaten, falsely accused, arrested, imprisoned and plotted against?*" Why does it always seem as if God waits to the very end? Have you ever felt like that? Here's my theory from personal experience, **God often has to wait until we have given up on trying to figure things out so that we are left with nothing but Him! As long as there is still some things**

**that we think we can control He will not move on my behalf.** It is during the time of prayer when we say, “*Lord I just don’t care to have control of my life any longer all I want is You!*” It is only then the Lord is free to move us the way He would have us. All this reminds me of my jewelry days when I learned how to work with platinum. You see when you work with platinum the only way that you can form it is to heat it up right up to point of melting then take it over to an anvil and beat it over and over. You do this several times until the metal becomes soft and pliable. **God allows situations and circumstances to heat and beat us up until our hearts become soft and pliable in the Masters hand then He can form us into something beautiful!** When all this took place Paul was had spending the night with the Lord in a prison cell. Paul must have thought that ministry was finished but the Lord told him that he was not through with him yet and to prove this in walks Paul’s nephew with what he had just over heard. What an encouraging sign!

Vs. 17-22 **Folks there is a balance between trusting in the Lord and acting on that trust;** I often error because I try to do things on my own apart from God. When I do that I never seem to get too far, but to trust in the Lord and do nothing is not good either. What would have happened if Paul had heard what his nephew had said and only responded, “*He great kid thanks for the info but God is going to deliver me, now go and run home, tell sis I said hello!*” Paul would have been dead! God provided an open door by placing Paul’s nephew at the right place at the right time but **Paul had to “act on that”**. A good friend of mine told once me, “*God already has an open door; you just need to find it and go through it!*”

Look at **the details of Paul's deliverance**: *Paul's nephew has to be willing to go, the guard has to be willing to take the nephew, and Claudius has to be willing to listen and believe what Paul's nephew is sharing with him enough to act. As committed and cunning as the 40 conspirators were they were no match for God who was on the side of Paul.* Isa. 54:17 says, "No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn." Paul needed to only remember his own testimony that he had shared a few days earlier to see how the Lord can change hearts. Jesus told Peter the same thing in Matt. 16:18 right after Peter's statement about Jesus where he said; "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus responded with, "on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." **What Jesus has planned for us, His Church, can not be thwarted either by others or us!**

#### IV.) Vs. 23-35 Moving day

Vs. 23-24 Don't you love it when God is your travel agent? Claudius Lysias was the commander of 1000 men and he sends 470 them with Paul plus he provides Paul a horse to ride on so they can leave quickly at 9pm. God, got Paul on the **red-eye** out of town escorted by 470 armed men to protect him at all costs. Further more, God books him **not** in a prison cell at Caesarea but rather at the "*Palace suites*" (verse 35).

Vs. 25-30 Felix had ruled the province of Judea for about seven years and had succeeded Pontius Pilate. He had gotten his appointment as governor through his brother's relationship with the Emperor Claudius and his mother Antonia, who was a boyhood friend of his. Felix and his brother Pallas had both been slaves and were given their freedom upon Claudius becoming emperor. As a freed slave he apparently wanted to

move up the social ladder as he married three times each one a princess. First, he married the Granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra and his third wife Drusilla who was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I and sister of Herod Agrippa II. The Roman historian Tacitus calls Felix “*vulgar and a ruffian who exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave.*”

The letter written to Felix has some interesting points:

- a. First notice that six times the first person pronouns (*I and me*) are used. This suggests that Claudius was mainly interested in looking good.
- b. Second notice Claudius leaves out, anything to do with how he had mistreated Paul. Remember he thought that Paul was an Egyptian; he arrested Paul without charging him and sought to beat him to find out what Paul had done.  
Claudius main motivation in doing what he did in sending Paul on the red-eye was twofold:

- **To make sure he looked good**
- **To make sure he did not look bad**

The only redeeming part of this letter as far as Paul was concerned is that according to verse 29 Claudius found him innocent of all Roman charges.

God is using a self-centered non-Christian who is only concerned about himself to further the Lord’s plans for Paul.

- **God thwarted the work of man, well planned and fully committed**
- **God furthered His plan through totally fallen man’s motivation**

Folk's if "*God be for us*", as Paul said in Romans 8:31 "*then who can be against us?*" As the Lord spoke to the prophet Isaiah in 55:8 "*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways.*"

Vs. 31-33 What happened to those forty committed fellows who were not going to eat or drink until they killed Paul? Did they end up dying? The Rabbis allowed four reasons for vows to be broken:

1. Vows of incitement
2. Vows of exaggeration
3. Vows made in error
4. Vows that could not be fulfilled by reason of constraint

So it would seem that those forty guys were eating drink soon after Paul was in Caesarea. The 470 men with Paul travel as far as Antipatris 35 miles away which was a Roman military post used as a rest stop for travelers between Jerusalem and Caesarea, it also marked the border of Judea and the gentile area of Samaria. On the next day all but the 70 horsemen returned to Jerusalem as they realized that they were far enough away from the 40 committed assassins. They then traveled the 30 miles to Caesarea where Paul and the letter are presented to Felix.

Vs. 34-35 Felix made sure that he was the right person to hear Paul's case and assigned him a room in the Herod's place. Only a few weeks earlier Agabus made his prediction that Paul would be bound and turned over to the gentiles and I wonder if Philip and the Church there came and visited Paul while he was in Caesarea. When you visit this sight it is perhaps one of the most scenic on the Mediterranean so for two years God had Paul in

protective custody for a little R & R on the beach. The Lord moving in Paul's life through ordinary means of what the world calls LUCK but the bible calls LOVE.

There may be times when you feel forsaken in your situations and circumstances. You may even feel forsaken by your friends or even the Church, but you can rest assured as God's Word says "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*" As well as Jesus word's in John 16:33 "*In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" As Paul would say no doubt from personal experience to the Romans "*Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" No wonder Paul could write to the Corinthians. "*We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*"