

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Living out the gospel with
one another in our homes

Acts 23:12-35 – Jason Finke

In Acts 21:27-40, Paul has been seized in the temple by a Jewish mob intending to put him to death. He is then “saved” by Roman soldiers responding to the commotion. When the soldiers are ordered to take Paul to the barracks, he requests an opportunity to address the Jewish mob. Acts 22 records Paul’s defense to the Jewish mob in which he provides his Jewish credentials and his zealousness for persecuting followers of Jesus. He then recounts his conversion on the road to Damascus and mission to the Gentiles. At this point, the mob gets riled up and the Roman soldiers are ordered to bring Paul into the barracks to examine him by scourging. Paul appeals to his Roman citizenship and is therefore delivered from the intended scourging, and given an opportunity to speak before the Jewish Council. Acts 23:1-10 records this hearing and the resulting uproar that it caused between the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Roman commander became concerned over this uproar and again ordered Paul be returned to the barracks.

In this week’s passage, a group of Jews plot to murder Paul and vow not to eat or drink until he is dead. The chief priests and elders are to request that Paul be brought to them for further questioning, while a group of them will ambush him on his way. In God’s providence, Paul’s nephew hears of their plot and warns Paul, who sends him to report it to the Roman commander. Upon learning of the plot, the commander sends Paul with a large contingent of soldiers to Felix, the governor, in Caesarea.

Sermon Main Point: Take comfort in God’s sovereignty

Discussion

1. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. How had Paul’s previous trials prepared him to trust in God’s sovereignty? How have your prior experiences grown your ability to trust in God’s sovereignty during difficult seasons of life?
2. Ted provided the lives of Moses, David, and Joseph as examples of God’s sovereignty. How does reading these accounts (and countless others in Scripture) encourage us to trust in God’s sovereignty in our lives?
3. Ted mentioned two reasons we should take comfort in God’s sovereignty – God’s awareness and His action on behalf of believers. Why should these encourage us when we are going through trials? What can we do to remind ourselves that God is in control of every situation we face in our lives?

4. Read Lamentations 3:1-26. How can Jeremiah still have hope despite all of the negative circumstances surrounding his life at this time? How can we find encouragement in Jeremiah's assertion in verses 21-26?

Reflection: Don't fight against the sovereignty of God. Read Romans 8:28-29. Do we recognize that God's purpose for everything in a believer's life is his/her good, namely to conform him/her to the image of Jesus or do we view hardship as fruitless?