

## 81. Paul Was Taken to Caesarea

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that nothing happens in our lives unless the Lord allows it. This means that we can trust the Lord to work through our lives either by life or by death. Christians who have this trust in the Lord will never need to fear what evil men will do to them, because the Lord will complete His plan for each of their lives. Today, we are going to see how the Lord protected Paul by getting him out of the city of Jerusalem during the night so that the evil mob that planned to kill Paul was not able to carry out its evil plan.

We saw in our last topic that more than forty men had agreed that they would not eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul. However, the nephew of Paul heard about the plan of these men and told Lysias, the Roman commander. Acts 23:23-25 tells us how the Roman commander responded. Those verses say, “And he called for two centurions, saying, ‘Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring *him* safely to Felix the governor.’ He wrote a letter in the following manner.” Here, we see that Lysias immediately developed a plan that the Lord used to protect Paul.

Lysias had one thousand soldiers with various responsibilities with him in Jerusalem. In order to protect Paul from the Jews, Lysias decided that the safest thing to do was send Paul to the Roman governor at Caesarea. The city of Caesarea was about sixty miles from Jerusalem and the governor had a larger army there. Lysias immediately called two of his centurions (a centurion was in charge of 100 soldiers). Lysias told the two centurions to take their two hundred soldiers plus an additional seventy horsemen and two hundred additional spearmen. At that time, the soldiers under a Roman centurion were so well trained that no other armies could compare with the Roman soldiers. Here, we see that Lysias decided to send nearly half of the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem to protect Paul from the Jews as they took him to Caesarea.

Lysias told the centurions that they were to leave at the third hour of the night. This would make it possible to remove Paul secretly so that the Jews would not even know that Paul was no longer in Jerusalem until he was almost to Caesarea. The centurions were to provide a horse for Paul to ride. We also see that Lysias wrote a letter to the Roman governor. We will see that some of the things he said in the letter were not exactly accurate, but Lysias wrote what he wanted so that the governor would think that he was doing a good job of keeping order in the city of Jerusalem. As Christians, we know that we are to “speak the truth in love”, but speaking the truth was not a concern of Lysias. He was most concerned to make the governor think he was doing his job.

The letter that Lysias wrote to Felix, the governor, is recorded for us in Acts 23:26-30 where we read, “Claudius Lysias, To the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings. This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains. And when it was told me that the Jews

lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him. Farewell.” We see that Lysias called the governor, “the most excellent governor Felix.” This was a title that was commonly used for a person that had a high rank or office.

Lysias told Felix that Paul had been seized by the Jews and said the Jews were about to kill Paul. He said that he came with troops, because he had learned that Paul was a Roman. Acts 22:24-26 says, “The commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him. And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, ‘Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?’ When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, ‘Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman.’” In actual fact, Lysias only found out that Paul was a Roman when the soldiers that were preparing to give Paul a scourging were asked if it was legal to scourge a Roman citizen who had not been condemned. However, Lysias did not want the Roman governor to find out that he had ordered Paul to be scourged and so he did not report what had happened accurately.

Lysias did tell what he had done to try and find out why the Jews wanted to kill Paul. To try and find out what Paul had done, Lysias brought Paul before their council (the Sanhedrin). It was before the Sanhedrin that Lysias suddenly realized that Paul was not guilty of breaking any Roman laws. Instead, Lysias said, “I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains.” Since Paul was not guilty of breaking any Roman laws, Lysias was actually saying that Paul was innocent as far as the Romans were concerned. Everything of which he was accused related to the Jewish law.

Lysias said that he had heard that the Jews had developed a plot to put Paul to death. That was the reason that he was sending Paul to the Felix. Lysias also said he had commanded those who had accused Paul to state their charge before Felix so that Felix could determine what accusations the Jews had against Paul. Here, we see that Lysias actually told Felix what he was going to tell the Jews the next morning after Paul was already most of the way to Caesarea.

Lysias went on to tell Felix that he had been told that there was a plot by the Jews to lay in wait for Paul. The word translated “to lay in wait” means *to plot to kill a person*. The word is used four times in the book of Acts. Each time it talks about a group of people waiting to kill Paul. Acts 20:19 says, “Serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews.” Here, the word is translated “by the plotting”. Lysias said that this was the reason why he was sending Paul to Felix. The plan by the Jews to kill Paul made it unsafe for Paul to remain in the city of Jerusalem. Lysias said that he decided to send Paul to Felix as soon as he heard about the plot. Lysias also said that he had commanded the accusers of Paul to go to Felix and state their charges against Paul. Since the plan to send Paul was kept a secret to avoid an immediate attempt to put him to death as he was taken from Jerusalem, this was actually what Lysias planned to do the next day.

Acts 23:31-35 says, “Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought *him* by

night to Antipatris. The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks. When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. And when the governor had read *it*, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that *he was* from Cilicia, he said, ‘I will hear you when your accusers also have come.’ And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.” The soldiers did as they were commanded and took Paul as far as Antipatris that night. Antipatris was nearly forty miles from Jerusalem. That meant that the soldiers had to make a long hard march that night, especially the foot soldiers.

However, the long march that night got the soldiers out of the hills where it would have been easier for those plotting the death of Paul to have killed him. Once the road passed Antipatris, the country was much more level and it would have been hard for anyone to hide along the road to attempt to kill Paul. As a result, the two hundred soldiers and the two hundred spearmen then returned to Jerusalem and the seventy men on horses took Paul the rest of the way to the city of Caesarea.

When the men on the horses arrived in Caesarea, they presented Paul to Felix, the Roman governor. They also gave the letter to the Roman governor. The governor immediately read the letter and then asked Paul a question. Felix asked Paul the name of the Roman province from which he came. Tarsus was located in the Roman province of Cilicia. At that time, the province of Cilicia as well as the area of Judea were both a part of the region over which Felix had the authority. As a result, that meant that Felix could hear the charges of the accusers of Paul once those accusers came to Caesarea.

We see that the accusers of Paul were very eager to bring their charges against Paul. Acts 24:1 says, “Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator *named* Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.” Caesarea was between sixty and seventy miles from Jerusalem. Here, we see that it was not the men who planned to kill Paul that came to Caesarea to accuse Paul. Instead, it was the Jewish high priest and a group of men from the Sanhedrin that came to bring the charges against Paul. Until they arrived, Paul was kept as a prisoner in Herod’s Praetorium. The Praetorium was called Herod’s Praetorium, because that palace had become the official residence of the Roman governor during the time Herod the Great ruled this entire region for Rome.

We see how the Lord protected Paul by getting him out of the city of Jerusalem before the men who had made the plot against Paul had the time to try and kill him. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that the Lord will protect us as long as the Lord still has work for us to do on this earth. That is why we do not need to live in fear, but can trust the Lord in faith. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to walk by faith.