

Divine Providence To The Faithful

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“And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. 14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. 15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him. 16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. 17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. 18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. 19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me? 20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. 21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. 22 So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me. 23 And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the

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third hour of the night; 24 And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. 25 And he wrote a letter after this manner: 26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting. 27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. 28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: 29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. 30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell. 31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris. 32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: 33 Who, when they came to Caesarea and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. 34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; 35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall” (Acts 23:12-35).

Introduction:

This passage is a vivid display of the sovereignty of God working amidst human scheming. It reminds us that for serious disciples, following Christ means trusting Him even in



the face of opposition, knowing that He works all things for His glory and our good (Romans 8:28).

1: The Reality of Opposition

"And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul." (Acts 23:12)

Paul faced determined opposition as these men plotted to take his life. Contemporary Christians must realise that opposition is inevitable for those who are faithful to Christ. Jesus Himself warned, *"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."* (John 15:18). Our call as disciples is not to avoid opposition but to endure it for Christ's sake (Matthew 5:10-12).

2: God's Providential Protection

"And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul." (Acts 23:16)

Though the enemy devised schemes, God orchestrated events to protect His servant. A seemingly insignificant boy became instrumental in delivering Paul. This illustrates God's providence - His divine intervention using ordinary means to fulfil His purposes (Psalm 91:11). For serious disciples, this is a call to trust God's unseen hand even in dire circumstances, remembering His promise in Isaiah 54:17: *"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper."*

3: Faithfulness Despite Opposition

Despite knowing the danger, Paul remained steadfast to his mission. His life embodies the call in 1 Corinthians 15:58: *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."* For serious disciples today, this is a reminder that faithfulness often demands courage and perseverance. As Paul later wrote in 2 Timothy 2:3, *"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."*

4: The Role of Authorities

"Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?" (Acts 23:19)

God used the Roman authorities to protect Paul, proving that He can utilise secular powers for His divine purposes (Proverbs 21:1). While our ultimate allegiance is to God, Christians are reminded in Romans 13:1 to respect earthly authorities, knowing God can work through them for His plans.

5: The Assurance of God's Sovereignty

"So the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris." (Acts 23:31)

Through all the scheming and danger, God ensured Paul's safe passage to fulfil His plans. This underscores the sovereignty of God in preserving His servants until their work is accomplished (Philippians 1:6). Serious disciples must live with the assurance that God's purposes cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2).

Conclusion:

Brethren, this study calls us to trust in God's providence and remain faithful amidst trials. Let us take courage from Paul's example and commit ourselves wholly to the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). As disciples, may we boldly proclaim the gospel, relying on the promise in Psalm 121:8: *"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."*

Let us pray for strength to face opposition, faith to trust God's providence, and boldness to remain steadfast in our calling.