

Paul was in Roman custody that night and the next day faced the Jewish religious authorities called by the Chiliarch to hear him. This chapter reports his conduct, his remarks and the resulting violent disorder. The various factions of the Jews he loved so much went ballistic and were about to literally tear him apart. Before he saw Christ in glory he had been like them, one of them. Now having gone back in his deep love for them to rescue them from their fate, God gave him “a taste of his own medicine,” so to speak. God does things like that. Even though he had become an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul reaped some of what he sowed before. God in His mercy limited the length and severity of their attacks. This time He intervened and moved the Roman troops to save him. They did. Paul then seems to have realized his ambitious mission to bring his countrymen to Christ was doomed to failure. We read of no souls convicted or converted to Christ, only passionate hatred inflamed towards Paul and his Lord. This was triggered by some Jews from among those who had violently opposed him throughout Asia and Europe who happened to be in Jerusalem. Spotting him there near the temple they had raised the alarm among the Jews in Jerusalem. Satan was using the grip he had on them to full advantage. Whether sent by God’s approval or not, Paul’s effort’s to present Christ to the Jews but added one more “nail to their coffin.” Though He is longsuffering not willing any should perish God’s patience does run out. He does not let lost sinners live forever. Sooner or later the lost who refuse or neglect to repent, die in their sins.

At this point the Jews had persecuted Christ’s apostles, evangelists and converts for almost forty years. Time was running out for the Nation that had rejected and crucified God’s Son. Paul’s public testimony as a free man was largely completed. He had already written some epistles and more would be written and preserved for the benefit of those, like us, living after the apostles were gone. The Assembly had been established across the Roman Empire and launched on its way. It would continue to be spread as the gospel spread and it would soon enter the post apostolic period, still underway today.

Meanwhile Paul was under God’s directed providential care, a prisoner of Rome under its protection, until a civil trial could be held. After he had rescued Paul from the attack the Jewish leaders, the Chiliarch received a tip from a nephew of Paul that the Jews were plotting to kill Paul by asking for another hearing. He immediately took action. He had just barely averted beating a Roman citizen, now he was not about to let anything more happen that would endanger his standing before his superiors. That very night he sent Paul on his way to Caesarea on the coast of the Mediterranean, about 60 miles away. It was the Roman government’s Seat of Government in Palestine. There a trial before the civil authorities could safely be held. Whether justice would be done in that venue was yet to be seen. But Paul rode there dignified with a protective armed

guard of 470 warriors. With a stop overnight at Antipatris, 40 miles down the road, it was the first leg of what was to be a long and arduous journey to Rome. He would testify to multitudes, including two governors, a king, the top echelon of the Roman empire, and the Emperor himself.. They will be called to account for what they heard and did not heed. And any who did heed and believe will join Paul, and us, in the glory. Paul will be rewarded for his faithful witness whether “successful” or not.

*2Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. 15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?*

The Jews of Jerusalem rejected Paul’s last attempt to reach them in person with the Gospel. They would still receive a full written documentation of the Christ of the New Testament to the Jews promised by the Old Testament prophets in the Epistle to the Hebrews (probably written by Paul). God doesn’t give up on anyone easily.

After the second violent life threatening attack in Jerusalem, Paul received a welcome visitor, the Lord Himself. Paul must have been deeply discouraged and disillusioned. We aren’t given even a hint of his prayer to the Lord prior to His appearance and the Lord gives only commendation and encouragement, no reproof or even words of correction. These, if any, all passed privately and personally between the Lord and him in prayer. Apparently no human intermediary was necessary in this case. Every believer has personal access to God in prayer through the Holy Spirit who makes “groaning that cannot be uttered,” Romans 8:26-28. Though Paul is thought to have written the epistle to the Romans before this incident, he was speaking from years of deep personal experience during his walk with the Lord in his labors. One in this earthly scene never quite outgrows the need for personal repentance before Him, and before others if offended. What grace! Yet little of these personal interviews with the Lord restoring our souls needs be made public. As with Paul in this case, only the Lord’s gracious words of encouragement were recorded. They are enough to satisfy curiosities. What grace! May we learn to go to our brother or sister overtaken in a fault with restoration and subsequent encouragement in mind. May we learn to go to such a one as we become aware promptly, personally, privately and confidentially. May I learn to go to the Lord before He finds it necessary to involve others. May I learn to go to Him and to others I have offended before they have to come to me about it.

So the Lord sent Paul on to Rome, safe arrival guaranteed, but uneventful trip not promised. Similarly we go on to glory.