

“PROVIDENTIAL PROTECTION”

Acts 23:23-35

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INTRODUCTION

Before we look in detail at the amazing way the Lord protects his humble servant, Paul, let us review some of the significant lessons we have found in chapter 23:

- 1) Believers must maintain a good conscience before God (23:1); cf. I Tim. 1:5.
- 2) Believers must not hesitate to apologize when wrong (v. 5). See II Cor. 8:21.
- 3) The Lord’s personal presence is our “most encouraging comfort” (v. 11). Cf. Ps. 16:11.
- 4) “Courageous young people can be a great blessing and help to their families and others” (v. 16). Cf. Miriam (Ex. 2:7) and Samuel (I Sam. 3:16-21).
- 5) Note the kindness and gentleness of the commander to Paul’s nephew; see Col. 3:12.
- 6) The world generally exaggerates their achievements (v. 27). We must be honest (Rom. 12:3, 16).

I. POWERFUL PROTECTIVE FORCE (23-24)

- A. Two hundred strongly armed soldiers
- B. Seventy cavalry
- C. Two hundred lightly armed “spearmen”
- D. Under the cover of darkness, with hurried movement

II. SIGNIFICANT PERSONS DEFENDING THE PRISONER (24B-25)

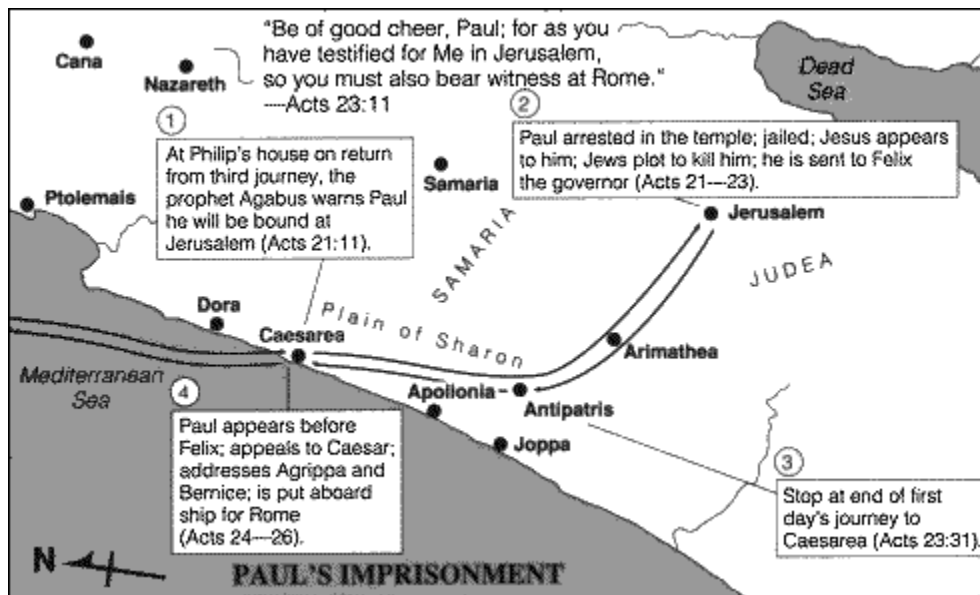
- A. The Roman tribune—Claudius Lysias
- B. The Roman “governor”—procurator

Felix was an unscrupulous ruler. In addition to having three wives, he considered himself capable of committing any crime and avoiding punishment because of his influence with the courts. Because of Felix’s tyranny, a group of Jewish revolutionaries, known as the Sicarii (“assassins”), flourished. Retaliation against the Sicarii by the Roman government eventually led to the downfall and destruction of Jerusalem. Tacitus, the Roman historian famously said concerning Felix that he “had the power of a king with the heart of a servant.”

III. IMPRESSIVE DEFENSE FOR THE ACCUSED (26-30) [Cf. other NT defenses]

- A. Note how Lysias “stretches the truth” and even lies to make himself look better
- B. Luke has given us a very accurate account of this letter; he would have heard it read at least three times, and Paul likely obtained a copy of it for his defense in Rome.
- C. Luke makes a **huge point** out of the various defenses for Christianity made by high Roman official in Acts: Gallio in ch. 18; Felix here; Festus later; Agrippa later. Eventually exonerated in Rome also

IV. SUCCESSFUL DELIVERANCE OF THE PRISONER (31-33)



V. PROMISED EXECUTION OF THE LEGAL DEFENSE (34-35)

CONCLUSION

Paul was to all appearances a quite insignificant prisoner with whom the Roman authorities were quite perplexed. What to do with such a man, so "insignificant" and yet so dignified and powerful in demeanor and speech and practice.

The Lord knows how to protect His servants, even when men are determined to undermine and destroy them and the cause of Christ.

FEAR NOT, GOD PROVIDENTIALLY PROTECTS HIS SERVANTS AND HIS WORK!