

## LESSON 31

# PAUL IN PRISON

**References:** Acts. 21- 17 - 26- 32

**Memory verse :** 2 Cori. 12 : 9- 10

**Objective:** To convince the learners that we must be ready to live for the gospel as well as to die for it and to inspire this for sacrificial service.

**Introduction :** Paul who did his ministry extensively across the world was confined in prison for the gospel's sake. We will study in this lesson about the reasons for his imprisonment as well as his ministry in bounds. Paul was presented before many kings. We will also study how Paul appealed to the Emperor and was thus sent to Rome.

### PAUL AT JERUSALEM :

We are going to learn about the imprisonment of Paul who worked with freedom until now. Paul was not unaware of what was going to happen to him. He came to Jerusalem willing even to die for the sake of Jesus Christ. (Act. 21:13). Meanwhile, a rumour was spread among the Jews in Jerusalem and all over accusing Paul of rejecting the Jewish law and persuading others against the observance of the law. The fact was that even then converted Jewish believers were unwilling to reject the law. As far as the Gentile converts were concerned, the Church council had already passed a ruling that they were not bound to observe the Law (Act. 15). Apostle Paul, however, had yielded James and other apostles to please the Jewish believers. Four of the Jewish Believers had Nazirite vows which were to be broken ceremonially in the Jewish Temple. While breaking the vow, sacrifices and offerings

were to be made in the temple. (Numb. 6:13-21). Paul was asked to pay the expenses of the ceremony, which he agreed to fulfil. But this not only did not fulfil the intended thing, but it provided the Jews an opportunity to arrest him in the Temple itself (21: 17-27).

### **STIR AGAINST PAUL AND GODS DELIVERANCE:**

A mere misunderstanding grew and developed into a turbulent riot against Paul. The people brought many accusations against him (Act. 21:27, 28). They siezed Paul, dragged him out of the Temple and closed the doors of the Temple. They were almost upto killing him . But the Lord immediately sent help through a high official. The Roman commander Lysias rushed to the spot and delivered Paul from their hands. They took him to the spot and delivered Paul from their hands. They took him to the castle of Antonia in chains. As they went up the stairs, the soldiers had to carry Paul because of the violence of the mob. The reason of this upraor was a misunderstanding of the Jews that paul defiled the holy place by taking with him a greek named Trophimos into the Temple. Compare this riot with the one at Ephesus. Here it is the religious blindness of the Jews; but at Ephesus the Gentile silversmiths caused trouble. There is nothing worse than religious blindness and nothing more harmful than religious fanaticism. Simliar was the cry of the crowd against Jesus Christ (Lk.23: 17-24).

### **PREACHING TO THE MURDERERS (ACTS 22 :1-21)**

There are ten sermons of Paul recorded in the Book of Acts .It is interesting to take not of them. Here Paul addressed a murdersous crowd. This is a strange address which none else may ever have ventured. How did people respond? When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they listened quietly.

The Chief languages of the Roman world in Paul's day were Latin, Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew. Latin was the language of the law courts; and of the literature of Rome. Greek was the cultural language of the empire, familiar to all educated persons and was the common medium of the majority of the people from Rome and eastward. Even in palestine Greek was currently spoken. Though the New Testament was written in Greek, Jesus and apostles as well as the early believers spoke Aramaic. Although Paul knew Greek, he chose to speak in Aramaic to draw more atteniton of the Jews. Paul summarized three things in his sermon.

- 1 His life prior to conversion (22:1-5)
- 2 His conversion (22: 6-16)
- 3 His call for the mission to the Gentiles (22: 17-21)

The people listened until the apostle mentioned his mission to the Gentiles. Then they shouted "Away with such a fellow from the earth, He is not fit to live". They shouted and threw off their cloaks flinging dust into the air. (22: 22-23). Then the commander directed that he be whipped and questioned in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this. As they stretched him out to flog him Paul said to the centurion standing there. 'Is it legal for you to whip a Roman citizen who hasn't even been tried and found guilty?' (22:29)

### **PAUL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN COUNCIL** **(Acts 22: 30- 23:10)**

When the centurion understood that Paul was a Roman citizen, he had him released and brought before the Sanhedrin, the highest civil court of the Jews. There Paul testified about his faithfulness in fulfilling his duty to God in all good conscience. At this, the high priest Ananias ordered the standers by to strike Paul. Immediately Paul said to him: God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to Judge me according to the law, and yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck? His courage to speak to the Highpriest in such a way is admirable, while it is to be admitted that it doesn't come up to the example of Christ (1Pet. 2. 21-23).

Further we see Pauls wisdom in tackling up such a dangerous situation. Knowing that some of them were Pharisees and the others Sadducees, Paul cried out in the Sanhedrin: My brothers I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead." When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the assembly was divided. As a matter of fact, the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. So he ordered the troops to take Paul away by force to the barracks. Notice that although the council was of honourable men, they were no better than wolves to Paul.

The same night Paul had a comforting vision of the Lord (Act. 23:11) In such and infavourable situation, when nobody from his fellowship or Church could meet Paul and comfort him the Lord proved a faithful companion in comforting and strengthening Paul. The Lord spoke to him that he would be sent to Rome for witnessing about the Lord. (22:17-21). See other instances when the Lord strengthened Paul (18:9, 10, 27:23-25)

### **THE PLOT OF THE JEWS FRUSTRATED (Act. 23: 12-30)**

The Jews who were divided the previous day were united again. They were united on an oath to kill Paul (23:12). About forty of them bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. This plot was brought to the notice of Paul by this nephew. Paul in turn, sent the information to the commander secretly who took emergency measures to transfer him to Caesarea. Caesarea the Head quarters of the Roman governor was 64 miles away from Jerusalem. The Chief captain sent Paul under strong guard to Caesarea with a letter to Felix the Procurator of Judea.

### **PAUL AT CAESAREA (A. D. 58-60) Acts 23:31- Ch 26**

In the city of Caesarea built by Herod the great in honour of Augustus Caesar, there were many palaces. That is where Cornelius had his residence when the apostle Peter was called to open the door of the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10). Felix ruled Judea from 53 to 60 A.D. His wife was Drusilla, the daughter of Herod who had, James killed with the sword. Felix was a sensual and a cruel official receiving too much bribes. Paul stood before this Roman official. When the Jews heard about this, they sent a group of people including a lawyer named Tertullus to file charges against Paul (24:1,2). Notice the charges they made against Paul. "We found this man to be dangerous nuisance; he starts riots among the Jews all over the world and he is a leader of the party of the Nazarenes. He also tried to defile the Temple, and we arrested him. (24:5,6)

Paul made a sermon before the Jewish accusers and before Felix (24:10-21). He pointed out that the accusations brought against him were baseless and proved that he was a keeper of the law rather than a breaker. He expressed his concern and love for the Jews. He concluded by saying, "It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today."

Felix however, left the matter in abeyance without passing a verdict. The reason can easily be understood as his expectation of bribes from Paul (see 24: 26,27) Felix allowed him some freedom in the prison of meeting his friends who would want to help him (24:23). Meanwhile Felix and Drusilla came to listen to Paul who told them the Gospel. In spite of listening to the Gospel from Paul, they didn't allow it to take effect in their life. As Paul spoke about righteousness, selfcontrol and the coming Judgement, Felix was afraid and sent him away. From the fact that he was afraid of the message, we can, understand the kind of person Felix was. Thus Paul continued in prison for two years.

### **TRIAL BEFORE FESTUS:**

After two years Felix was succeeded by Festus (A. D. 60-62). He was more good natured and righteous than Felix. Paul was called in before Festus and he stood on trial. The Jews who had come down from Jerusalem brought serious charges against him: Paul made his defense before the court. In the meantime, the Jews had already made an earnest request to Festus to transfer him to Jerusalem so that they could kill him along the way. So Festus, wishing to do a favour to the Jews asked Paul if he would like to go to Jerusalem for trial. But Paul hesitated to go to Jerusalem but appealed to Caesar. This was in coincidence with the Lord will already known to Paul that he would be sent to Rome. Thus the evil scheme of Jews was frustrated again.

### **PAUL BEFORE THE KING AGRIPPA (25; 13-26: 32)**

The King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay respects to Festus. He was the son of Agrippa I who had killed James. He had two sisters; Drusilla the wife of Felix and Bernice. When Festus told Agrippa about Paul, he too expressed the desire to see and hear him. The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience with the high ranking officers and the leading men of the city. At the commend of Festus, Paul was brought in. When permission was granted to speak, Paul made his address to that honourable audience (Acts 26: 1 -29). Agrippa was quite familiar with the law. This was the second time Paul recounted the story of his conversion. He proved that the change occurred in him was undeniable and that his ministry conformed to the heavenly vision he receive. He made it clear that his preaching was based on the Old Testament scripture what was the response of Festus and Agrippa to Paul's convincing preaching? Festus said to Paul. "You are mad Paul! In this short time do you think

you will make me a Christian. Paul answered whether in a short time or long time, my prayer to God is that you and all the rest of you who are listening to me today might become what I am, except of course, for these chains! (26:25, 29). The royal assembly was silent for a while. With all solemnity, they passed the verdict; "This man has not done anything for which he should die or be put in prison. He could have been released if he had not appelaed to Caesar".

Paul spent more than two years in the prision of Caesarea. It was a compensation rest God gave him for his constanat labour.

### **EXCERCISE - 31**

#### **Answer the following questions**

1. Why was Paul confined in prison?
2. What was the rumour spread among the Jews in Jerusalem and all over?
3. What ruling did the Church council pass?
4. Who delivered Paul from the hands of the angry mob?
5. Summarise the sermon of Paul to the murderers?
6. How did God comfort Paul at the time of the violent dispute between the Pharisees and Seducees?
7. On what basis did the Jews Unite again?
8. Why was Paul sent to Caesarea under a strong guard?
9. Which lawyer laid charges against Paul?
10. How many years did Paul stay in the prision at Caesarea?
11. Which rulers tried Paul?
12. What was the response of Festus and Agrippa to Paul's convincing preaching.

