

Paul a Prisoner: the Plot Acts 22:30-23:35

by J.R. Miller

The sermon explores Paul's experience of conspiracy and deliverance, emphasizing God's providence and the balance between faith and self-preservation.

Scripture: Psalm 121:7, Acts 22:30, Acts 23:11

Topics: "God's Providence", "Faith in Trials"

Description

J.R. Miller discusses the events surrounding Paul's imprisonment and the conspiracy against him, emphasizing how God intervened to protect Paul through seemingly insignificant means, such as the presence of his sister's son. Despite the wickedness of the plot against him, Paul remained steadfast in his faith, demonstrating that while God has a plan for each of us, we must also take action to preserve our lives without compromising our integrity. Miller highlights that God's providence is at work even in the darkest situations, and that believers should trust in His care while actively participating in their own deliverance. The sermon reminds us that while God may not always deliver us from physical danger, He provides grace and strength in times of trial, as seen in the life of Stephen. Ultimately, the message is one of hope and assurance that God is always aware of our circumstances and is working for our good.

Transcript

The night after the stormy meeting described in the early portion of this chapter, Jesus appeared to Paul and bade him to, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." This assured Paul that his life was safe amid all the plots of his enemies.

It is strange how bitter human hate may grow, and to what depths of wickedness and treachery men may descend, under the influence of passion. The records of persecution have many times since told of similar plots for the destruction of holy men and women, whose only crime was that they worshiped God according to the dictates of their own conscience.

A fouler murder could not have been planned, than these men plotted. Yet their chief priests and elders--the representatives of religion in the land, were ready to help carry out this nefarious conspiracy! They professed to want to look into the case of Paul more carefully. We may not be the objects of any such human conspiracy in our Christian land--but there are unseen enemies who are always plotting our destruction, and we need to fear these. There are many assassinations of souls of which no record is made in this world's chronicles.

God knows all that goes on in the most secret places. Men may make their plots in the darkness or in inner rooms, where no human ear can hear what they are saying--but there is an ear that always hears. Nothing can be hidden from God. No conspiracy ever can surprise him, or defeat any purpose of his.

The method of the apostle's deliverance, is well worth careful study. Forty desperate men used to just such work, "formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul." They had asked the chief priests and elders to aid them by furnishing the opportunity for the assassination, and these holy ecclesiastics had promised to do so. The prisoner was to be called for by the Sanhedrin on the plea of completing the hearing of his case. Then, as he passed from the barracks to the court room, the assassins would spring up out of their hiding place and kill him! It looked as if nothing could thwart the plot.

But our God is a loving God, and no human power can defeat his plans. Paul had a sister living somewhere, and she had a son. No other mention is made anywhere of this young man. How he came to be at Jerusalem at this time--we know not. We know only that God had him there at the right time, and that in some way he learned of this conspiracy and then hurried to the castle to tell his uncle about it.

It is interesting to see on how many little things Paul's deliverance depended--the presence of his sister's son in the city, the young man's learning of the plot, his admittance to the castle, his ready access to Lysias, the chief captain's interest in the prisoner, and his prompt action when he heard of the plot. That is the way God always takes care of each one of his children! He keeps his eye on every life, every moment--so that nothing ever occurs without his notice and permission, in the life even of the smallest or obscurest believer!

Of course, he does not always deliver his people from their enemies. Stephen was not delivered. But God helped him in another way--by giving him grace to die so triumphantly, and to witness so grandly for Christ in his death; that even the sparing of his life for years could not have done so much for Christ's kingdom, as Stephen did in his martyrdom. Only let us settle it in our minds, that this is a sample of the care God is taking of each one of us day and night--if we are his children.

The prophet Agabus had foretold that Paul should suffer in the hands of enemies, and Paul said he was ready to die at Jerusalem, if need be, for the sake of Christ. Yet here when he learns of the conspiracy to murder him, he does not let the plot go on without an effort to defeat it. Though willing and ready to die for Christ--he wants to live and does not needlessly throw away his life. We are required to use all lawful means to preserve our own life, as well as the lives of others. We are not needlessly to rush into the jaws of death. We are to protect ourselves against plots and dangers by all right means, though never by doing anything wrong. We are never to lie or commit any sin against God--in order to save our life. God does not want his plans carried out--by the breaking of his commandments. But in all right ways, we are to defend our own lives and seek their preservation.

God has his plan for every life, and each one is to help to work out that plan for himself in his own case. God promises deliverance from danger and victory in temptation--but we ourselves have something to do in realizing the deliverance and the victory. It will not do to take up a promise and plead it--while we put forth no hand of our own. We are saved altogether by grace, yet we have much to do in saving ourselves. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

All the powers of the world are subject to God's command, and when he needs them--he calls for them. Here he calls into service nearly five hundred men of the imperial army of Rome to defend one despised missionary. The Roman officer did not know that he was helping to carry out a plan of Almighty God, when he ordered up the escort that night to carry his imperiled prisoner away from the hands of his enemies. Men are every day unconsciously fulfilling God's promises and carrying out God's plans, without the slightest thought of what they are doing!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/paul-a-prisoner-the-plot-acts-2230-2335/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net