

**Saturday, July 1, 2023 ▫ Read Acts 21:31–40**

*Questions from the Scripture text: What are they seeking to do (v31)? Who receives what news? What does he do in v32? What do the people stop doing? What does the commander do to Paul and ask about him (v33)? What answers does he get (v34)? So, what does he decide? What do the soldiers have to do in v35? Why (v35b–36)? Where is Paul about to enter in v37? What does he ask? About what is the commander surprised? For whom had the commander mistaken him (v38)? How does Paul identify himself now in v39? What citizenship does he have? For what does he now ask? What does the commander give him (v40)? Where does Paul now stand, what does he do, and what amazing response does he get? How does he speak?*

**What are we to think, when providence brings us difficulties like Paul's chains?** Acts 21:31–40 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these ten verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **even in believers' difficulties, the Lord is loving believers and employing them in the advance of His kingdom.**

**Chains of protection.** All Jerusalem was in an uproar, during a feast, because the Jews sought to kill Paul. v31 hearkens back to the scene of the city while Jesus was being brought out before Pilate. Thankfully, in this case, rather than joining in the attacks of the Jews, the Romans were protecting Paul (v32). The chains that they put on Paul in v33 were friendly in more ways than one. Believers must remember that they have been protected from wrath, and they are being protected from their sin. Even difficult providence comes in the love and wisdom that protects us. We are in the protective custody of sovereign providence.

**Chains of love.** Not only were they applied by the people who had just saved Paul from the mob, but they had been prophesied by the Holy Spirit, in Whose fellowship we live (cf. 2Co 13:14), and Whose great ministry to us includes pouring out God's love in our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5). Recently, the Holy Spirit has been telling Paul in every city that chains awaited him (cf. 20:23, 21:11). So when they apply the chains to Paul, it's actually a reminder that this has been lovingly ordained and brought about by his God. And this in addition to the circumstances in which it occurred—keeping him from sinning against Christ's once-for-all sacrifice and breaking down the dividing wall (cf. Ep 2:14). Everything that happens to a believer comes to him in the love that gave him Christ. The Holy Spirit may not have told us specifically what is going to happen, but He *has* planned what is going to happen, and He has told us many of the reasons why. Believers are not only in protective custody of sovereign providence but in loving custody.

**Chains of fellowship.** We've already noted the similarity in the Jewish murder mob. There's another similarity in v34, where the witnesses against Paul can't agree (cf. Mk 14:56, 59). And another in v36, where the "Away with him!" also reminds of the same thing on the day that Christ died for sinners (cf. Lk 23:18; Jn 19:15). Christ sympathizes with us in our sufferings. He receives them personally (cf. 9:4). Our suffering is together with Him (cf. Rom 8:17). Our sufferings are His sufferings (cf. 2Cor 1:5). All suffering of believers is sweetened by Christ's fellowship with us in them.

**Chains of opportunity.** The reality of *Who* has superintended his chains has reminded Paul of *why* he is in those chains: for the Name of the Lord Jesus (cf. v13). Paul takes advantage of his captive audience (he's captive to his chains, but the crowd is captive to their rage, and the soldiers are captive to their duty). And he takes advantage of his abilities to speak both Greek (v37) and Hebrew (v40). And he takes advantage of his citizenship (v39). Everything at his disposal, he takes advantage of in order to tell of the Lord Jesus Christ! Is the glory of the Name of Christ, everything to a believer? Then let that believer take advantage of his circumstances, abilities, and any other assets he might have for the sake of that Name.

What are your most difficult circumstances right now? From what is the Lord protecting you? How can you know that it all comes to you in God's love? Who is with you in this suffering? What opportunities have you been taking to tell of the goodness and glory of the Lord Jesus?

*Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You and praise You for the wisdom and love of Your providence. And we thank You that even when that wisdom and love send suffering, You give us to have fellowship with Yourself in those sufferings in Jesus Christ. Give us also to love His Name to do all things for His glory, and to take all opportunities that we can to tell of Him, we ask in His Name, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP46 "God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength" or TPH509 "Why Should Cross or Trial Grieve Me?"**

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Acts 21 verses 31 to 40 music. God's words. Now, as they were seeking to kill him. News came to the commander of the garrison, that all jerusals and uproar, Immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. When they saw the commander in the soldiers, they stopped beating paul.

Then the commander came near and took him. And commanded him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So, any could not ascertain the truth because the two amount He compared him to be taken into the barracks.

When you reach the stairs, you had to be carried by soldiers. Because of the violence of the mob. The multitude of the people followed after crying out away with him. Then as paul was about to be led into the barracks, you said to the commander May i speak to you.

He replied. Can you speak Greek? Are you not the egyptian who sometime ago stirred up or rebellion? And Led the four thousand assassins out in the

wilderness. Paul said, I'm a Jew from Tarsus and Salamis. A citizen of no mean city. Then, I employ you permit me to speak to the people.

So when he had given information posted on the stairs and motion to his hand of the people, and then there's a great silence, he spoke to them and the Hebrew language saying,

And that's the end of our portion. Word written.

So the chains finally come and when they come even humanly speaking, they are chains and protection. Just from a straight, physical temporal providence perspective. It's better Roman chains than Jewish stones. And so, the turnout to be. Uh, quite welcome. Even for the preservation of his life. When they finally do arrive.

Just so God's providence is often wise. Well, it's always wise but it often comes to the wisdom that we did not anticipate. We may be concerned about something that. It seems like it's going to happen. And when it does happen, it comes. By the way of even a temporal mercy and earthly mercy.

This is ultimate, people are talking about like, when they're like, I didn't know, I got made me late but it turned out there's a car accident. Uh, kept me from getting killed. It's actually good to be true. God often and his wisdom. It gives us. Difficulties. That turn out to be, temporal mercies.

But these are just change the protection or chains of love. No, the Romans interrogated. And the commander and Garrison. They do not love all, but at least not yet. And, but they're coming in the love of the Holy Spirit. You remember the Holy Spirit had been telling him about these chains.

We heard him say that in chapter 20 verse 23, that the Holy Spirit had already been telling him in every city at that point, when he was in my latest. And this would continue, we saw in two more stops. And in this chapter, even with the dramatic demonstration of Agabus who came down from Judea, and then verse 11 used, Paul's belt.

And bound his hands and to his feet. But knowing that this comes from the Holy Spirit, he knows of course. That it comes from the one in his fellowship, we live. He's the one who and second Corinthians the love of God, or the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God.

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Becomes. Than the love of the one who he himself wrote in Romans, 5:5. Support out the love of God into our hearts and coughing. Well, it doesn't say like a pink offering their uses the language. Drink coughing for pouring out.

Loser. Therefore chains of love. Just remember that.

Providence's personal it is overruled by God of his determined and planned by God, and therefore, it comes in the same love that gave you Christ.

This is why the greater protection of the two. Was actually the protection of sinning. When the chains spare him from the Jewish crowd and especially the side of the chains. That were a fulfillment of the word of the Holy Spirit that he had heard so many times. Certainly, the apostle would have realized.

What? The Lord had just spared him from and no, I don't mean dying at the end of the Jews. Although that's kind of messy but today is gain. The problem is for a moment. He was about to sin against the ones for all sacrifice of Christ. That against the breaking down of the middle wall of separation or the dividing wall.

And so, these are chains of love from the Holy Spirit. They're also change of fellowship with the Lord Jesus. There are many things. That are uniquely in common. No, it's not.

Exactly the same. But there are many elements. When Paul, of course, is one through him. We have learned that we have fellowship with Christ in our sufferings. And the sufferings of Christ abound in us so that the comforts of Christ. All abound in us. We suffer together with him and then we'll be glorified together with him and inherit together with him.

And his introduction. To the Lord, Jesus was personal introduction to the Lord Jesus. Was included to realization that. Jesus was receiving the suffering of his first people, his personally done to him. When he said Paul Paul, it's also rather. Why are you persecuting me? But even here, you have the juice.

Seeking to kill him. And you have all Jerusalem in an uproar with their seeking to kill him. During a feast. You have witnesses who? Trying to say one thing. Uh yeah. Trying to come up with the charge that will. Will work for putting him to death. But they don't even agree with one another.

Verse 34. Some cried, one thing. Some another

You have the statement that we find in. Both Luke and John's account to the crucifixion. When Jesus. Is before Pilate away with him.

Full statement about Jesus that they were yelling was. Away with him. Such a man is not deserved to live. Or deserves to die. Luke 23:18, and John 19:15. All of these things remind Paul that. The Lord Jesus is with him. This is something that the Lord had promised him.

On more than one occasion. Personally, but it's also something that's true with you. Lord, Jesus has sympathy with us and our sufferings, it's not just that we are united to him. He also is united to us. Really does receive personally take as if unto him go through it. With us.

So it's quite amazing. When I believe he suffers persecution. Or even if it's not persecution, just suffering in general, because you realize, it's not just that God is well, in the believer, go through this is that the glorified Christ. As united to this one who is suffering.

Then the sun would continue to do that. To go through things with us, not leaving us as orphans. He's giving us a spirit with his Spirit. We know is also the one by him. The Father and the Son come and make their home with us. And so he has your chains of protection.

Chains of love, chains of fellowship. But they're also chains of opportunity. The. The Garrison. Now, at least a couple of the guys are literally chained to Paul.

And they're held captive by their duty. The commander also. And so he takes advantage of that. The Jews the Hebrews. The Jews are held captive by their range. It's not like there can just give up and go home.

Ball takes advantage of knowing. Both Greek and Hebrew. He side bars with the commander in Greek. And then when he turns to the crowd, he speaks in Hebrew where Aramaic. What will he brought me? Both of those? Especially since you probably memorized the entire Hebrew Bible. He takes advantage of his Roman citizenship.

When he's introducing himself and he says, he's a Jew from Tarsus and Salamis you make sure to throw in there I citizen which we're going to find out in chapter 22 was not good news for the commander who had put chains on him because he wasn't actually allowed to do that to a road citizen.

He's passing them off to the next guy. He's like, dude, be careful. He's a citizen. He takes advantage of all these things to do. What? Well, we're going to have the content of the speech later, but To tell them about Jesus. To tell them that Jesus is alive. To tell them that he is.

Saving centers.

Wouldn't tell them many things about Jesus. But, it seems that the reality of who superintendent has genes. Reminded Paul of the why. The volumes in those chains. He knew of it, he knew it, we say reminded because he's the one who said, Why are you weeping and breaking my heart?

For I am willing, not only to be bound, but to die. For what? For the name of the Lord Jesus. Well, now he's been bound. For what? For the name of the Lord Jesus. So suddenly, he's Is no longer. Trying to get into the temple to Commit, a blood sacrifice.

Uh, against Jesus's once for all sacrifice. Or to separate the nations. To observe the dividing wall of separation. In fact, the thing that's going to end is evangelism is what he says that the gospel is going to the Gentiles. They heard him up until that point. And then he says Gentiles and they lose their minds.

Is no longer trying to satisfy the The session of the Jerusalem church. By doing all these things that are inconsistent by this Christian doctor. Now, he's looking for a place looking for a way. To testify to the glory of the name. Of Jesus, the savior. He knows what he's been found.

And you know how you suffer. Yes, it's for your good. Providence is protecting you perhaps from something temporal. Definitely, from more of your own sin. Because he'll providence comes in the same love that gave me Christ. And one of the reasons you're suffering is To enjoy fellowship with Christ who sympathize us with you in it.

Many a Christian prisoner. Has been amazed at. The joy. That Christ is with him in the cell and There's nothing that can be done particular way. Well, another reason for your suffering for whatever trial, you might go through, Is to have opportunity to bring honor to the name of Jesus.

We should watch for those opportunities and take advantage of them. As the Lord sustained, helped with servant here. To do as well. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for this portion of your word and for giving it to us.

On this particular day. We pray. Lord. That cross our trial. What not grieve us? But that we would know the fellowship of Christ and the love of your spirit. That we would know your protection even from our remaining sin. And we pray that you would help us to. Take advantage of.

Every part of the providence to give us, For the name of Jesus three, ask it all in his name.