Sermon Date: March 2, 2014 Paul Before the Sanhedrin – Acts 23:1-35 Doug McBride

Read Acts 23:1-35

From last week:

Things are starting to heat up drastically for Paul. In last week's lesson it was noted Paul is very strategic. Remember from Acts 21:39 that although his very life was at threat, Paul still strived for one thing: to speak to the crowd and testify about Christ. Note also that Paul could have identified himself as a Roman citizen earlier (from Acts 21:39) rather than later (Acts 22:25) but he chose to keep in step with his calling although it threatened his own survival.

- 1. If you had to guess, what might have been Paul's strategy in Acts 23:6? See also v. 7-9.
- 2. What stunning encounter does Paul have in v. 11? One commentator noted that although Paul was delivered from jail cells before, this time the LORD *met him in* the jail cell rather than deliver him. In other words, *Jesus entered Paul's prison*. For what reason?
 - a. Often we ask the LORD to deliver us *out* of our circumstances when what He wants is to us meet us *in* our circumstances. Why would He want to do that? Has there been a time when you prayed that God would deliver you from something but it did not go well? Did you experience the comfort of Christ? If so, how? If not, what happened?

Doug makes the following observation:

"Paul knows God is faithful – in the end God wins. As a result we win. With that in mind Doug challenged us as ones who **know the end of the story** to read it as though you don't know about the vision from Jesus." View this through the lens of Paul at this moment in time. Paul did not know the details of how this would turn out, he could only trust and receive comfort from the LORD with an internal trust that God was good to His word. How has this or does this challenge you?

3. How desperate were Jews to end Paul's ministry (v. 12-15)?

4. How desperate were the commander and Centurions to protect Paul?

5. In what ways is Claudius Lysias being very politically savvy in his letter to Felix (23:26-30)?

6. Earlier we discussed how Paul is strategic. What might have been the LORD's strategy in the events that have taken place in chapter 23 (See Acts 23:11)?

Take home thoughts to wrestle with:

Recognize God's hand – He is working out His purposes and standing next to us even through the seemingly negative things in life – NOT just the positive ones. Some believe God works out His purposes **most** during the difficult, suffering moments in life.

- What do you think? How might that differ from our current cultural worldview?
- Is it possible that the LORD is nearest to those who are struggling?
- Can we conclude that He has special favor on those who are suffering?
 - Psalm 34:18 "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit."
 - See also 2 Corinthians 1:5 and 2 Corinthians 4:17
 - See the Beatitudes Matthew 5:3-4