

Acts 22:22-23:10, Avoiding Beatings and Riots
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Overview

Paul confronts two forces in this chapter that we must also reckon with in our life and testimony: civil government and organized apostate religion. Study the characteristics of each, and Paul's responses.

A. 22:22-23:10, The Role of Civil Government

There are two truths about civil government that we must always keep in tension.

1. 22-24, Its divine purpose

Articulated in Rom. 13:1-7, "the minister of God." As before Paul's speech, so here an alternation between people and the Romans, protecting Paul.

2. Its inherent weakness

1 Sam. 12:16-19. Human rulers usurp the place of God as king over his people, and their self-interest drives them to competition with God and his anointed, Psalm 2.

The unifying thread running through this section is the Chiliarch's need to figure out what's going on.

a) 21:33,34, asked the mob.

"What's going on here?" Predictably, given the nature of mobs, he got no consistent reply.

b) 22:24, proposed to torture Paul.

Shows that the fact that God uses civil authorities does not mean that they are righteous or justified in all their actions! In fact, he is operating in the worst tradition of bureaucracies.

1) There has been a disturbance on his watch.

2) He must file a report for his superiors, which includes a statement of the reason for the disturbance.

3) His initial inquiries from the crowd did not yield an adequate statement for his report.

4) Paul is obviously at the center of things. He was at the physical center of the original disturbance, and both the attention of the crowd to his address from the stairs and their outburst against his words confirms Paul's centrality. If the Chiliarch can pin some wrongdoing on Paul, that will satisfy the bean-counters.

5) The most efficient way to generate such a statement from Paul is by torture. Scourging = beating with thongs in which were tied nails, broken glass, and rocks--frequently killed the victim.

Clearly, he is motivated entirely by bureaucratic processes, not at all by any desire to support right over wrong.

His effort flounders on the unexpected discovery that Paul is a Roman citizen.

c) 22:30, convenes the Sanhedrin, hoping that the official ruling body of the Jews can articulate their complaint more clearly than could the crowd. The most reasonable of his three approaches, though he takes it only when easier routes fail.

3. Summary: Civil government is BOTH venial AND God's chosen minister; Ps. 76:10, "the wrath of man shall praise" him.

4. How does Paul handle it? Takes advantage of the benefits it offers him as a Roman citizen, 22:25. Two points of comparison with similar tactic in Philippi (16:37), each yielding a principle:

a) not unwilling to claim citizenship;

--> 1 Cor. 7:21, "if thou mayest be made free, use it rather."

b) does not do so at the earliest possible moment, and this delay yields benefits:

1) in Philippi, the salvation of the jailor, and a fear on the part of the magistrates that would make life easier for the young church;

2) in Jerusalem, a fear on the part of the Chiliarch (22:29) that may have made him take better care of Paul.

--> Matt. 10:19,20, "it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak." It is the Lord, not simply our own cleverness, who directs us when and what to say when we are before magistrates. Need to be guided by him.

B. 23:1-9, The Failings of Organized Religion

Human government has a corrupt origin but serves a divine purpose. Organized religion is just the opposite--its origins at some point are divine, but it universally opposes the truth. In this case, we are dealing with "orthodox" Judaism, which originated in God's covenant with Israel at Sinai.

The record is organized around two statements by Paul and the responses of the Sanhedrin to them. To Rome as the appointed minister of God, he responds; with the apostate Sanhedrin, he takes the lead. In both claims to the S., he truthfully makes claims that any of them would readily make, thus claiming oneness with them and forcing them by attacking him to deny principles that they themselves hold. --> As with Rome, deals with them on their own terms.

His basic tactic here seems to be to discredit the Sanhedrin with the Chiliarch. The only charge against him is that the Jews are upset with him, and that charge is credible only if the Jews are seen as rational. By showing their inconsistency and instability, Paul makes the case, "being opposed by people such as these is no grounds for condemning me."

1. 1-5, Claim to a Clear Conscience

- a) 1, the claim
 - 1) Consistent with his later profession, Acts 24:16. Not a bold claim to sinlessness; only that he has never consciously violated his conscience. (He has on occasion found out afterward that he has sinned.)
 - 2) Appropriate in this context.
 - a> Indeed, we are justified *before God* by faith, not by works, Rom. 4:2.
 - b> But that same passage (first class condition, "since") agrees with James 2:21-24.
 - c> --> need for believers to be "blameless" in the eyes of "those who are without," 1 Tim. 3:2,7.

- b) 2, the smitten conscience. This Ananias (not the one named in the gospels) is renowned even in Jewish literature for his wickedness. He is shamed by a claim that he ought to be able to make but cannot, and replies not rationally but with force. --> Expect this sort of treatment; recognize it as implicit endorsement of the truth of what we say, that it cannot be answered rationally. Luke 21:15, "a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."

- c) 3, Paul continues to hold the upper ground. The High Priest's command is contrary to the Jewish law, and Paul calls him to account on it. (NB: Paul may well have been a member of the Sanhedrin when Stephen was judged; knows its rules and uses them to his advantage.)

NB: this prophecy was fulfilled; Ananias was assassinated for his pro-Roman stance during the Jewish war.

- d) 4-5, when challenged on this harsh speech against the high priest, Paul admits that he did not consider the man's office. May be intended ironically: "I couldn't tell that he was HP, since he commanded something so unlawful." In any event, he acknowledges his own subjection to the law (Exod. 22:28). --> Even apostate religion has some claim to respect; cf. Jude 9, Michael and the Devil disputing over the body of Moses.

2. 6-9, Claim to Pharisaic Orthodoxy

- a) 6, the claim: having a vision from a spirit such as he claimed on the road to Damascus (cf. v.9), and holding to the resurrection (in this case, of Jesus), were consistent with his devout Phariseeism. The Pharisees were the "fundamentalist" party in Judaism, and Paul cites his identification with them as something that was "gain" to him, Phil. 3:5.

His tactic is shrewd. He recognizes that the group is divided, and seeks to show that their corporate opposition to him is no greater than their opposition to one another: "Be wise as serpents, gentle as doves," Matt. 10:16. If he is worthy of

punishment for offending the Jews, so should all of them be punished, for they all offend one another.

b) 7-9, their response: a chaotic argument, from which the Chiliarch extricates him.

3. The tactics of apostate religion

a) 2, Resorts to emotional opposition when its error is pointed out.

b) 3, Honors office above godliness.

4. Paul's conduct: Contrast with the Lord Jesus in his trial?

a) Compare 1 Pet. 2:21-23, which enjoins us to follow Christ's example before his judges.

1) No sin

2) No guile (deceit, trickery: v.6 could be construed as this)

3) Not revile revilers (Paul accused of this in v.4)

4) Not threaten threateners (v.3 looks like this)

Did Paul violate this principle?

b) But compare Christ's own conduct with Peter's list:

1) Reviling: The "whited wall" accusation is one that originates with the Lord, Matt. 23:27. Such speech in itself is thus not contrary to the example of Christ; did Christ also revile?

2) Threatening: The Lord did not remain silent when smitten, but protested, John 18:23. And his claim to be "seated at the right hand of the power of God" (Luke 22:69) is tantamount to warning them that they who seek to judge him will one day be judged by him. Did he, under threatening, threaten?

3) Guile (trickery): The Lord's answers to dilemmas posed him by the religious leaders had the same effect as Paul's claim to be a Pharisee, showing the internal inconsistency of his adversaries: Matt. 21:25; 22:21. Was he thus being tricky or guileful?

c) If Peter is to be consistent with Christ's own conduct, he must be condemning, not cleverness or deserved rebuke or legitimate warning of judgment, but such tactics taken *on the grounds of personal revenge*. It is the underlying motive, not the action itself, that is wrong. If *in response to our suffering*, out of impatience and loss of temper, such speech is wrong. But under the direction of the Spirit, it may be necessary. Cf. the imprecatory psalms: wrong if uttered for our own revenge; required as God's messengers.

Summary

1. Two adversaries of God's people in every age: civil government (which has usurped the office of Jesus Christ as king of the world, yet is God's minister) and apostate religion (which has turned from the truth of God to serve its own purposes).
2. Paul's example shows that we should deal with these on their own terms, so far as we can without compromising our values:
 - a) take advantage of a citizen's rights
 - b) maintain integrity and honesty of life that cannot be impeached.
3. The 1 Pet. 2 principles:
 - a) We must not resort to trickery, or insult, or threats, to give vent to our anger or impatience in suffering.
 - b) At the same time, we should be "wise as serpents," ready to point out sin and warn of coming judgment, under the Spirit's direction and in his power.

Hymn: 183, The Son of God goes Forth to War

Analysis

A. Final alternation, people-military

1. People: contrast p
 - a) 22)/Hkouon de\ au)tou^ a)/xri tou/tou tou^ lo/gou
 - b) quote p
 - 1) quote f: kai\ e)ph^ran th\n fwnh\n au)tw^n le/gontes,
 - 2) quote: reason p
 - a> text: Ai)^re a)po\ th^s gh^s to\n toiou^ton,
 - b> reason: ou) ga\r kaqh^ken au)to\n zh^n.
2. Military:
 - a) *Note the commands given by the chiliarch:*
 - 1) 21:33, to bind Paul with two chains
 - 2) 21:34, to carry him into the castle
 - 3) 22:24, to bring him into the castle (followed with instructions to scourge him)
 - 4) 22:30, the chief priests to assemble
 - 5) 23:10, the soldiers to rescue Paul from the Sanhedrin
 - b) 23 kraugazo/ntwn te au)tw^n kai\ r(iptou/ntwn ta\ i(ma/tia kai\ koniorto\n ballo/ntwn ei)s to\n a)e/ra,
 - c) 24 e)ke/leusen o(xili/arxos ei)sa/gesqai au)to\n ei)s th\n parembolh/n,
 - d) purpose p
 - 1) text: ei)/pas ma/sticin a)neta/zesqai au)to\n
 - 2) purpose: i(/na e)pignw^| di' h(\n ai)tti/an ou(/twse) pefw/noun au)tw^|.

B. Two attempts to learn the reason for the riot

Compare 24b and 30. Could compare the attitudes and actions of the chiliarch, the Jews, and Paul

1. 23-29, Paul avoids a beating

- a) Chiliarch:
chiastic: crowd's uproar on the outsides, commands in the center
- 1) 23 kraugazo/ntwn te au)tw^ⁿ kai\ r(iptou/ntwn ta\ i(ma/tia kai\ koniorto\^n ballo/ntwn ei)s to\^n a)e/ra,
 - 2) 24 e)ke/leusen o(xili/arxos ei)sa/gesqai au)to\^n ei)s th\^n parembolh/n,
 - 3) purpose p
 - a> text: ei)/pas ma/sticin a)neta/zesqai au)to\^n
 - b> purpose: i(/na e)pignw^| di' h(\n ai)ti/an ou(/tws e)pefw/noun au)tw^|.
- b) Paul: quote p
- 1) time: 25 w(s de\ proe/teinan au)to\^n toi^s i(ma^sin
 - 2) quote f: ei)^pen pro\s to\^n e(stw^ta e(kato/ntarxon o(Pau^los,
 - 3) quote: Ei) a)/nqrwpon (Rwmai^on kai\ a)kata/kriton e)/cestin u(mi^ⁿ masti/zein;
- c) Centurion: quote p
- 1) incitement: 26 a)kou/sas de\
 - 2) quote f: o(e(katonta/rxhs proselqw\^n tw^| xilia/rxw| a)ph/ggeilen le/gwn,
 - 3) quote: reason p
 - a> text: Ti/ me/lleis poiei^ⁿ;
 - b> reason: o(ga\r a)/nqrwpos ou(^tos (Rwmai^o/s e)stin.
- d) Chiliarch: quote p
- 1) concomitant circumstance: 27 proselqw\^n de\
 - 2) quote f: o(xili/arxos ei)^pen au)tw^|,
 - 3) quote: Le/ge moi, su\ (Rwmai^os ei)^;
- e) Paul: quote p
- 1) quote f: o(de\ e)/fh,
 - 2) quote: Nai/.
- f) Chiliarch: quote p
- 1) quote f: 28 a)pekri/qh de\ o(xili/arxos,
 - 2) quote:)Egw\ pollou^ kefalai/ou th\^n politei/an tau/thn e)kthsa/mhn.
- g) Paul: quote p
- 1) quote f: o(de\ Pau^los e)/fh,
 - 2) quote:)Egw\ de\ kai\ gege/nnhmai.
- h) Chiliarch:
- 1) 29 eu)qe/ws ou)^ⁿ a)pe/sthsan a)p' au)to\^ oi(me/llontes au)to\^n a)neta/zein:
 - 2) reason p
 - a> text: kai\ o(xili/arxos de\ e)fobh/qh
 - b> reason: AQ p
 - 1> AQ f: e)pignou\s o(/ti
 - 2> AQ:
 - a: (Rwmai^o/s e)stin

b: kai\ o(/ti au)to\n h)^n dedekw/s.

2. 22:30-23:10, Defense before the Sanhedrin: Next day
Note chiastic structure, this time Rome/Jews/Jews/Rome.
Paul's two claims here are components of his defense before Felix, 24:14-16.

a) setting:

- 1) time: 30 Th^| de\ e)pau/rion
- 2) purpose: boulo/menos gnw^nai to\ a)sfale\s to\ ti/
kathgorei^tai u(po\ tw^n)Ioudai/wn
- 3) e)/lusen au)to/n,
- 4) kai\ e)ke/leusen sunelqei^n tou\s a)rxierei^s kai\ pa^n to\
sune/drion,
- 5) kai\ katagagw\n to\n Pau^lon e)/sthnen ei)s au)tou/s.

b) First Utterance: interchange p
Their response to his clear conscience

1) Paul: quote p

- a> quote f: 23:1 a)teni/sas de\ o(Pau^los tw^| sunedri/w|
ei)^pen,
b> quote:
1>)/Andres a)delfoi/,
2> e)gw\ pa/sh| suneidh/sei a)gaqh^| pepoli/teumai tw^|
qew^| a)/xri tau/th's th^s h(me/ras.
*Scriptural basis: Rom. 4:2. Justified by works before
men; by faith before God.*

2) Ananias: quote p

- a> quote f: 2 o(de\ a)rxiereu\s (Anani/as e)pe/tacen
toi^s parestw^sin au)tw^|
b> quote: tu/ptein au)tou^ to\ sto/ma.

3) Paul: quote p

- a> quote f: 3 to/te o(Pau^los pro\s au)to\n ei)^pen,
b> quote:
1> Tu/ptein se me/llei o(qeo/s, toi^xe kekoniame/ne:
2> kai\ su\ ka/qh| kri/nwn me kata\ to\n no/mon,
3> kai\ paranomw^ n ke/leu/eis me tu/ptesqai;

4) associate priests: quote p

- a> quote f: 4 oi(de\ parestw^tes ei)^pan,
b> quote: To\n a)rxiere/a tou^ qeou^ loidorei^s;

5) Paul: quote p

- a> quote f: 5 e)/fh te o(Pau^los,
b> quote:
1> Ou)k h)/dein, a)delfoi/, o(/ti e)sti\n a)rxiereu/s:
2> quote p
a: quote f: ge/graptai ga\r o(/ti
b: quote:)/Arxonta tou^ laou^ sou ou)k e)rei^s
kakw^s.

c) *Second Utterance*

Their response to his Jewish heritage

1) Paul: quote p

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a> circumstance: AQ p
  1> AQ f: 6 Gnou\s de\ o( Pau^los o(/ti
  2> AQ:
      a: to\ e(\n me/ros e)sti\n Saddoukai/wn
      b: to\ de\ e(/teron Farisai/wn
b> quote f: e)/krazen e)n tw^| sunedri/w|,
c> quote:
  1> )/Andres a)delfoi/,
  2> e)gw\ Farisai^o/s ei)mi, ui(o\s Farisai/wn:
  3> peri\ e)lpi/dos kai\ a)nasta/sews nekrw^n [e)gw\]
      kri/nomai.
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2) Response

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a> circumstance: 7 tou^to de\ au)tou^ ei)po/ntos
b> summary: e)ge/neto sta/sis tw^n Farisai/wn kai\
      Saddoukai/wn,
c> kai\ e)sxi/sqh to\ plh^qos.
d> 8 Saddoukai^oi me\n ga\r le/gousin mh\ ei)^nai
      a)na/stasin mh/te a)/ggelon mh/te pneu^ma,
e> Farisai^oi de\ o(mologou^sin ta\ a)mfo/tera.
f> 9 e)ge/neto de\ kraugh\ mega/lh,
g> quote p
  1> quote f: kai\ a)nasta/ntes tine\s tw^n grammate/wn
      tou^ me/rous tw^n Farisai/wn diema/xonto le/gontes,
  2> quote:
      a: Ou)de\n kako\n eu(ri/skomen e)n tw^| a)nqrw/pw|
      tou/tw|:
      b: ei) de\ pneu^ma e)lla/lhsen au)tw^| h)\ a)/ggelos;
      c: mh geomaxwmen
h> 10 Pollh^s de\ ginome/nhs sta/sews
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d) Rome to the Rescue

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1) fobhqeis\ o( xili/arxos mh\ diaspasqh^| o( Pau^los u(p'
      au)tw^n
2) quote p
a> quote f: e)ke/leusen to\ stra/teuma
b> quote:
  1> kataba\n
  2> a(rpa/sai au)to\n e)k me/sou au)tw^n,
  3> a)/gein te ei)s th\n parembolh/n.
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