

Lesson VI.

THE PLOT AGAINST PAUL

May 10, 1903

Acts 23 : 12-22. Study vs. 10-35. Commit to memory vs. 20-22.

Read Acts 22 : 29 to 23 : 9.

12 And when it was day, ¹certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13 And they were more than forty which ²had made this conspiracy.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, ³that we will eat nothing until we have ⁴slain Paul.

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you ⁵to-morrow, as though ye would ⁶enquire something more perfectly concerning him : and we, or ever he come hear, are ready to ⁷kill him.

16 ⁸And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, ⁹he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain : for he hath ¹⁰a certain thing to tell him.

Revised Version—¹Omit certain of; ²Omit had; case more exactly; ³slay; ⁴Put Paul's; ⁵and he came; ⁶something; ⁷asked; ⁸going aside asked him privately; ⁹ask; ¹⁰unto; ¹¹thou wouldst; ¹²more exactly concerning him; ¹³under a curse neither to eat; ¹⁴the; ¹⁵go, charging him, Tell; ¹⁶signified.

18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and ¹¹prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and ¹²went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?

20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to ¹³desire thee that thou wouldst bring down Paul to-morrow ¹⁴into the council, as though ¹⁵they would enquire somewhat ¹⁶of him more perfectly.

21 But do not thou yield unto them : for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves ¹⁷with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him : and now are they ready, looking for ¹⁸a promise from thee.

22 So the chief captain then let the young man ¹⁹depart, and charged him, *See thou tell no man that thou hast ²⁰shewed these things to me.*

EXPLANATION

Connection—The events between this Lesson and the previous one are : Paul's speech from the castle stairs; his rescue by the soldiers from the Jews enraged by his mention of the Gentiles; his escape from scourging by claiming to be a Roman citizen; his defence next day before the council; another rescue by the soldiers; and a vision of the Saviour at night, ch. 22 : 1 to 23 : 11.

12. **Banded together.** They saw that the Roman officer would not punish Paul, unless they could prove him guilty of some crime; and so they resolved to kill him. **Bound themselves under a curse;** called down God's anathema or curse upon themselves, if they did not keep their vow. It shows how desperately in earnest they were. **Neither eat nor drink;** an ancient form of oath, 1 Sam. 14 : 24. It made fools, too, in Paul's case, of those who took it.

13. **More than forty.** It would be easy to get any number of men to do the deed, so bitterly did they hate Paul, ch. 22 : 21, 22. **Conspiracy;** from a Latin word meaning "to breathe together," a secret agreement as if whispering together. Some think that these men belonged to the Sicarii or Assassins referred to in ch. 21 : 38.

14. **The chief priests and elders;** members of the Jewish council, ch. 22 : 30. **We have bound ourselves.** They do not hesitate to tell the plot to the council, who were as eager for Paul's blood as

themselves. They thought they were doing a religious act. **Under a great curse.** The expression used by the conspirators is one which denotes great earnestness. Its literal translation is, "with a curse have we cursed ourselves."

15. **With the council;** with the approval of the whole council. **Signify;** give notice to. **As though ye would enquire.** It would seem to the Roman officer quite reasonable that the council should be allowed to examine Paul more closely. **Ready to kill him;** on his way to the council. The priests evidently consented to this villainy, ch. 25 : 2, 3.

16. **Paul's sister's son.** Nothing more is known of him; but this one deed showed him faithful, brave and resourceful. **Heard.** It was no secret among the Jews. **Into the castle.** Paul's friends had apparently free access to him, as afterwards at Caesarea, ch. 24 : 23. The chief captain may have treated him the more mildly because he wished to make amends for his fault in having bound a Roman citizen (ch. 22 : 27-29) contrary to law.

17, 18. **Brought him to the chief captain.** The centurion's compliance with Paul's request shows the Roman sense of fair play, also the respect which Paul's conduct had gained for him. **Paul the prisoner;** probably still bound with chains, ch. 21 : 33. **Prayed.** The old meaning of this word was simply "to ask." Paul had asked the centurion.

19. **Took him by the hand;** in a friendly way, to make him feel at home. **What is that, etc.?** He was anxious to know; for plots were very common, and governors and officers had ever to be on their guard.

20-22. **The Jews have agreed.** The story is again told, perhaps in the lad's own words. **A promise from thee;** to send Paul to the Jewish council. **Charged him;** to keep silence, to give him time to rescue Paul (see vs. 23, 24).



A Roman Centurion