

Paul has been taken into custody by the Chief Centurion in order to prevent the mob from killing him even though the Roman commander has no idea what, if any, crime Paul has committed. When the mob is asked as to Paul's crime, everyone cries out this thing and that thing until the Centurion has no choice but to take him into custody for his own protection.

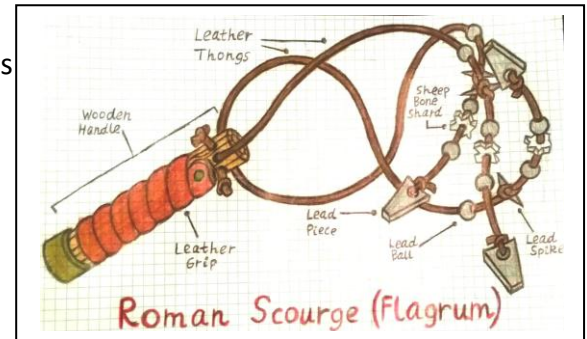
As Paul is being taken into the 'castle,' he asks to be allowed to speak to the mob; he recounts his own testimony of Salvation by God's Grace and Sovereign Choice until he says that 'magic' word:

**Acts 22:21:** *'And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence **unto the Gentiles.** <sup>22</sup> And they gave him audience unto **this word, (Gentiles)** and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. <sup>23</sup> And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air;' suddenly the whole crowd drive themselves into a mad frenzy throwing off coats and throwing up dirt!*

**Verse 24:** *'The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.'*

And there we see the evil, ignorant cruelty of the Roman Empire; the same men who beat, scourged and nailed to a cross the Lord of Life are now about to subject Paul, innocent of any crime whatsoever, to the barbarous cruelty of the scourge.

A scourge, as you see, is a handle with several thongs containing pieces of metal, bone and shells. Its purpose was to shred the flesh of the back which often resulted in the death of the one scourged. The absolute evil in this is what we see displayed in the words of the centurion, that Paul should be 'examined' by scourging. In other words, the pain of the torture would force a confession to whatever crime was alleged.



God does also use His Scourge in order to correct His beloved children

for their good and growth. Both Greek words have the same root but God's Scourge has a double meaning: to His enemies He will punish and even destroy but to His children, he does correct, discipline and lovingly rebuke: Strong's definition of God's Scourge: **'a calamity, misfortune, esp. sent by God to discipline or punish.'**

To His children, His Scourge is good: *'... My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: <sup>6</sup> For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; ... Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness' Heb 12:5* ...but to His enemies:

*'That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. <sup>7</sup> I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.'* Isaiah 45:6

**'...shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?'** Amos 3:6

Examples of God's direct action in causing calamity:

The destruction of all life on Earth (except within the safety of the Ark) in the Flood of Noah's time.

The complete obliteration of Sodom and Gomorrah in Lot's time.

All that God will pour out upon the World during the soon coming Tribulation.

The death of Herod as he is struck down and eaten by worms.

*'God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked... But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies' Nahum 1:2*

God is Sovereign; He is in complete control of all things, in all places, at all times past, present and future! He sees every possible trail of every possible choice of every human and spirit He has created; He guides, directs, blocks, turns and uses every human/spirit choice and decision in furthering His Eternal Plan to Glorify Himself, finally, in every part of all Creation.

*'For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. <sup>19</sup> For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;'* Colossians 1:16

*'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, **and for thy pleasure they are and were created.**'* Revelation 4:11

*'... so that **in all things God may be glorified** through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* 1Peter 4:10

*"But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, **But He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'**" Daniel 4:34*

God is directing and using every one of these Jews and Gentiles who've come against Paul and against the Lord Jesus Christ to further His perfect Plan throughout all time... to glorify Himself forever!

But... even though many are the enemies of God and many are the enemies of His children... we do not know, who are His enemies and who are those He will, in His Grace and Mercy, call to Himself; we are still commissioned to take the Gospel to anyone and everyone without preconception as to whom He will call.

*'Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;'* 2Cor 5:11

Paul is the perfect example of living out what He wrote to the Corinthians; we see His faithfulness in every city; Jews and Gentiles come against him and his Gospel and yet he continues to preach and write until death. As soon as Paul simply said the word, 'Gentiles,' all these Jews go absolutely nuts! Irrationally insane! This illustrates the reality that God has blinded them to the Truth of the Gospel and of Himself. People try to say, 'well, the Jews worship the same God as we,' but, no, they do not! What does the Word say? *'For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.'* Romans 11:25

*'God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.'* John 4:24 In what spirit and what truth? *'Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**'* John 14:6 No one has a way to God or Truth or Life apart from Jesus Christ. Jews are the same as Gentiles; no one has access to God except, and only, through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ Whom these particular Jews had, only a few years before, pushed the Romans into scourging, whipping, beating and finally crucifying. But, the very same Grace, Mercy, forgiveness and Eternal Life is available to every Jew and Gentile as God does, severally, call to Himself.

**Verse 25:** *'And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? <sup>26</sup> When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.'*

Paul knows full well that it is unlawful to scourge or even to bind a Roman citizen, as we'll soon see. Paul was never scourged and he wasn't anxious to endure so now. To the Corinthians, he'll write: *'Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. <sup>24</sup> Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. <sup>25</sup> Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; <sup>26</sup> In journeyings*

*often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren'* 2Cor 11:23

Paul was willing to endure any hardship for the sake of the Gospel and for the sake of these same Jews; Paul endured very much persecution for the sake of the Gospel and for the sake of all of us...

To scourge a Roman citizen meant death. Citizenship really meant something in Rome, as it used to really mean something in our own nation...

In two days, we'll begin the process to see if our nation will continue for a time or if it falls off into darkness...

**Verse 27:** *'Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. <sup>28</sup> And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.'*

Paul has just saved this chief captain's life! To scourge a freeborn Roman would have been a death sentence.

**Verse 29:** *'Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.'*

Suddenly everyone fearfully scurries away from Paul; no one wants to be connected in any way with what has just happened; it was even illegal for the chief captain to have ordered Paul to be bound with thongs.

**Verse 30:** *'On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.'*

Now he really wants to know what this is all about; notice that he 'commands' the chief priests and all the council to appear before him; he is humbling them, forcing them to come; he could have just as easily sent his soldiers to arrest them all and they know it. Then, to add further insult, he brings Paul in without any restraints whatsoever.

**Acts 23:1:** *'And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. <sup>2</sup> And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.'*

Paul simply states that he has faithfully lived according to God's Word but this self-righteous, judgmental son of darkness commands him to be humiliatingly hit in the mouth and, so, Paul says to him what Jesus had said to some of these same hypocrites, years earlier: '

*'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. <sup>24</sup> Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. <sup>25</sup> Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. <sup>26</sup> Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. <sup>27</sup> Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup> Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. <sup>29</sup> Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, <sup>30</sup> And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. <sup>31</sup> Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. <sup>32</sup> Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. <sup>33</sup> Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? <sup>34</sup> Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: <sup>35</sup> That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. <sup>36</sup> Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.'* Matt 23:23

This high priest is part of that generation upon which Jesus' prophesied Judgment would soon fall; he had

doubtless been one of the Pharisees against whom Jesus had railed those many years before and here he was again, as high priest, carrying on that proud tradition of hating the true God and all His true messengers.

*'For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.'* James 2:13

**Verse 3:** *'Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?'<sup>4</sup> And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?'<sup>5</sup> Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.'*

Notice that Paul does not acknowledge him as being 'God's high priest,' but only as, 'ruler of the people.'

This hypocrite is headed for a terrible earthly judgment in just a few years when Jerusalem is destroyed but then, after rotting away in Hades for 3000 years, he will be raised up to stand before the Final Judgment to receive the worst judgment of all; but he will cry out, 'Lord, Lord, wasn't I Your high priest!?' and Jesus will say, *'Depart from Me, I never knew you, into the Lake of Fire prepared for Lucifer and all his fallen angels!'*

I wonder whether or not the Lord Jesus Christ will command that we, His Body and Bride, be part of His Final Judgment of the World. Think about it... one more way to fully impress upon us the weight of His Love, Grace and Mercy toward us if we must help pass judgment upon someone else, especially someone who wronged us... especially someone whom we did not willingly forgive from the heart... just something to think about...

**Verse 6:** *'But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.'<sup>7</sup> And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.'<sup>8</sup> For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.'*

This is the brilliance of Paul's intellect; immediately, he sizes up the situation and, being the brilliant lawyer he is, he yells out the one thing that would turn this whole affair upside down and what he said was, strictly speaking, true: all the Jews' opposition to him really did boil down to this one thing: Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, proving the Truth of Who He was/is and of all He said and did and that, they had, in fact, crucified the Lord of Life, their long prophesied, long awaited Messiah! And, so, the result is a huge free-for-all which once again illustrates the mindless loyalty to whatever creed one's tribe embraces; these Pharisees, with the Sadducees were all ready to stone Paul... remember what they'd said yesterday?

*'Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live!'*

Paul is a Pharisee; his entire schooling had prepared him to recognize, to hear from the Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit and to listen and learn.

But now, since they have reason to believe he might be 'one of them,' here's what they say...

**Verse 9:** *'And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.'*

Oh... so now they claim to not want to fight against God! Unbelievable! The mindless hypocrisy! Paul never said anything about a spirit or an angel speaking to him! But these are men to whom evil spirits have been whispering lies since long before Jesus even came on the scene.

**Verse 10:** *'And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.'<sup>11</sup> And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.'*

Even though *'We find no fault in him!'* like rabid dogs, they're ready once more to tear him to pieces!

But cheer up, Paul... you're going to remain a prisoner and you'll be taken all the way up to Rome!

For all Paul knows, Rome is where he'll be tried, convicted and executed and, yet, he is more than willing to go!