

I. THE VOW OF FOURTY

- A. Life has its share of mountains and valleys
 - 1. The wealth and prosperity teachers tell us that life is nothing but roses
 - a. “If you love God and just have “faith” everything goes WELL!”
 - i. They will say that when life is rough, it’s YOUR lack of faith
 - ii. They never allow for our Father to teach us anything
 - iii. They never allow for testing and trials to come
 - b. But that is NOT Biblical – it has not place in our lives
 - i. YES, we do pay the consequences of our sin often times
 - ii. You can choose the sin but you can’t choose the consequences is a Bible Truth – no question
 - iii. But remember: Saved people DO NOT pay the majority!
 - iv. He took on our sin debt and we go to Heaven not Hell
 - c. (Turn) 2 COR. 11:23-27 – was Paul lacking in love for God or faith?
 - 2. We need go no further than the Book of Psalms to see SAVED people
 - a. With distress in their lives – King David crying out to God
 - b. PSA. 6:3 – “My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?”
 - c. PSA. 10:1 – “Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?”
 - d. But then the Psalmist remembers – PSA. 10:14 – “Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.”
 - 3. Dare we remember the Prophet Jeremiah, called the “weeping prophet”?
 - 4. How about Elijah in 1 Kings who prays “and I, even I only, am left.”
 - 5. Why not consider our Lord Jesus Christ Himself?
 - a. Man of sorrows, what a name, for the Son of God who came
 - b. Whose visage was more marred than any man?
 - c. Who hung on a cruel cross NOT for His own sin, but for mine?
- B. Paul had enemies who claimed to be willing to give anything to destroy him
 - 1. They bound themselves (vs. 12) – Be CAREFUL what you vow!
 - 2. They were working with the PRIESTS! (vs. 14-15)
 - 3. NUM. 30:2 – “If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.”
 - 4. There is no doubt in my mind that these men were sincere in their vow
 - a. God removed their target from their reach
 - b. I wonder how many of them starved to death that next week?
 - c. This was intense hatred (we only PRESUME they didn’t starve)

- C. Remember as well: In Paul's life, this happened RIGHT after vs. 11!
 - 1. So many times, we hear from God in our prayer lives or in a service
 - 2. And then the next minute are knocked off our feet by a small reverse
 - a. Amazing how sometimes people have faith during LARGE events
 - b. But the minor ones seem to test our trust in God
 - c. Is it that we think we have control in the minor problems?
 - d. But KNOW we don't have control in the major trials?
 - 3. The Forty Vow, but the Plan is Found!
 - 4. The Plot is Foiled, and a Letter sent to Felix!

II. THE PLAN IS FOUND

- A. Discovered by Paul's nephew (vs. 16-17)
 - 1. If you make a conspiracy to do evil, watch out! - God knows!
 - 2. ECC. 10:20 – "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter."
 - 3. As was the custom in the day, when a family member was in prison
 - a. The relatives would care for them, visit them, feed them
 - b. So, it would be normal for this young man to show up there daily
 - c. We don't know HOW he heard, just that he DID and ACTED on it
 - 4. We don't know much about this nephew (blood relative in the flesh)
 - a. Just that he was likely younger by the captain's manners (vs. 19)
 - b. The question is, why was he in Jerusalem, rather than Tarsus
 - c. The prevailing thought: He was ALSO sent to Gamaliel's School
 - i. Like Paul had been – the family seemed to have wealth
 - ii. With Gamaliel, maybe explains how he heard the plan
- B. The plan is made known to the Roman Officers (vs. 18)
 - 1. Despite (perhaps) not being Saved, the nephew pleads for Paul's life
 - a. "Do not thou yield unto them" (vs. 21)
 - b. Even the lost understand real injustice at a deep rational level
 - c. I demand CIVIL JUSTICE even for my political enemies
 - 2. Please understand: We are currently in a religious conflict for our culture
 - a. The enemies of Christ (true enemies) are NOT well-meaning
 - b. They are not simply victims of indoctrination
 - i. Many are WILLING PARTICIPANTS!
 - ii. Don't be shocked when they send death threats
 - iii. Don't be shocked when they beat someone mercilessly
 - iv. And then the beaten person goes to jail!
 - c. In this case, even the ROMAN EMPIRE behaves more justly than our own government in light of recent politics!
 - 3. The Romans took ANY threat to peace very seriously! Businesslike!
- C. God's PROVIDENCE overrules the plans of man
 - 1. I personally believe that Paul wrote the Book of Hebrews

- a. It was written somewhere around 67 AD
 - b. Paul is taken in Jerusalem sometime around 60 (7 years earlier)
 - c. Perhaps this plot was on his mind when God used him to pen HEB. 13:5-6 – “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (6) So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”
2. Think about the deliverance of the Jewish people in the time of Esther
 - a. Consider the presence of God in the fiery furnace
 - b. Contemplate the protection of God in the lion’s den
 - c. God means GOOD to His children
 - d. JER. 29:11 – “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

III. THE PLOT IS FOILED

- A. God doesn’t do things by half measures – He is GOD
 1. King Saul’s son Jonathan said, 1 SAM. 14:6 – “And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.”
 - a. There is NO power that restrains God from doing what He wants
 - b. Only HE can restrain Himself – such as His gift of free will to us
 - c. He can save by man or by few
 2. We often think about the few in these instances
 - a. Gideon’s army of 32, 000 vs. 135,000
 - b. And God says, that’s too many – whittles them down to 300
 - c. NOW God will get the glory in this victory
 3. But note, God can ALSO save by MANY
 - a. Not protected by a small squad / quaternion with two dozen
 - b. Not even a centurion with his hundred
 - c. 470 Men GUARDING PAUL (vs. 23) – God really overdid it 😊
- B. The captain didn’t get where he was by being a fool
 1. He told the young man (Paul’s nephew) to tell no one! Keep it secret!
 - a. He didn’t want to tip his hand to the enemies of Paul
 - b. He didn’t know if there were more than just this 40 (uproar)
 - c. He knew his duty to a Roman citizen and kept it discrete
 2. He left at night, not morning when such things would be done (vs. 31)
 3. He took swift WISE action – not wanting to touch off a riot
- C. He acted with calm authority (this is a good model for all men)
 1. This captain seems to be a good man but lost – look at his character
 - a. He heard the reports of his underlings ACTS 22:26
 - b. He took time to find out for himself in ACTS 22:27

- c. He revealed a little of himself to Paul ACTS 22:28
- d. He treated the young boy with gentle kindness ACTS 23:19
- e. He heard the word of a stranger ACTS 23:21
- f. He spoke candidly and with trust to a young person ACTS 23:22
- 2. He was DECISIVE – there is a dearth of decisiveness in the land today
 - a. Men need to learn how to set a course and sail it!
 - b. Older Men need be the example, Younger Men need to follow it!
 - c. Not domineering or crass, just calm leadership
- 3. Look at his simple, clear, unhurried orders (vs. 23)
- 4. He even works efficiently – the preparations to maneuver take time
 - a. He started his men to work, and trusted them to complete it
 - b. And then he got to work on his own (the letter to Felix)

IV. THE LETTER TO FELIX

- A. A respectful Greeting (vs. 23)
 - 1. It is NEVER wrong to be respectful (Priests, Kings, Presidents) (vs. 287)
 - 2. He gave a summary of what he saw (without excruciating detail)
 - 3. He provided a full reason why he couldn't deal with it himself
 - a. This captain was not punting the ball (Felix did though – vs. 34)
 - b. He WOULD have been able to make a determination
 - c. He acted prudently because he didn't know the scope of the plot
- B. He spoke with a reasonable understanding of the Jewish religion (vs. 29)
 - 1. "I thought this was a religious argument, but it WAS NOT."
 - 2. He puts into the record his testimony – there was NOTHING illegal here
 - 3. But he could no longer risk the peace of Jerusalem over it (vs. 30)
- C. This letter was just, careful, and wise - God used the Plot to get Paul to Rome
 - 1. This is all leading to Paul's appeal to Caesar – a Roman right!
 - 2. It is no mystery why the book of Romans includes ROM. 8:28 – "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

V. THE LIFE IN FAVOR

- A. Paul truly was "the called according" to God's purpose
 - 1. Paul had no reason to doubt nor reason to worry (vs. 11)
 - 2. Jesus is our SAVIOR – not just some future event! But NOW!
- B. Jesus alone can deliver our SOULS FROM HELL / OUR LIVES FROM DESTRUCTION
 - 1. But He also delivers our 3-fold being to Glory!
 - 2. 1 THESS. 5:23 – "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (24) Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."
- C. Be like Paul! Put YOUR trust in Him - Be Saved Today