

Acts 22:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.

Analysis

And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom

—The tribune reveals he purchased citizenship (πολλοῦ κεφαλαίου, *pollou kephalaiou*, 'with much capital') during the reign of Claudius, when citizenship was notoriously for sale through bribes. He likely bought it through freedman Marcus Antonius Felix's corrupt connections. The tribune's use of τὴν πολιτείαν ταύτην (*tēn politeian tautēn*, 'this citizenship') shows both pride in the acquisition and surprise at Paul's claim.

And Paul said, But I was free born—Paul's ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ γεγέννημαι (*egō de kai gegennēmai*, 'But I also have been born [a citizen]') asserts higher status. Citizenship by birth (Latin: *ingenuus*) was more prestigious than purchased citizenship. Paul's Tarsian family had held citizenship for generations, possibly granted for service to Rome. This revelation elevates Paul's social standing in the tribune's eyes—he's not just any prisoner but a citizen of superior rank.

Historical Context

Under Claudius (AD 41-54), Roman citizenship expanded through dubious means. The emperor's corrupt freedmen sold citizenship for profit, debasing its value. The tribune Claudius Lysias likely bought his citizenship and took 'Claudius' as part of his name (Roman practice when granted citizenship). In contrast, hereditary citizenship was rare and prestigious in the provinces. Tarsus was a 'free city' where select families held both local and Roman citizenship. Paul's family may

have earned it through loyal service or manufacturing military tents for Roman legions.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's superior citizenship status illustrate spiritual truth—believers are 'free born' children of God, not purchased slaves?
2. What does this passage teach about using social status, when available, for kingdom purposes without deriving identity from it?
3. In what ways might God providentially arrange circumstances of birth, education, or social position to advance His gospel purposes?

Interlinear Text

ἀπεκρίθη	τε	ὁ	χιλίαρχος	Ἐγὼ	πολλοῦ	κεφαλαίου	
answered	And		the chief captain	I	With a great	sum	
G611	G5037	G3588	G5506	G1473	G4183	G2774	
τὴν	πολιτείαν	ταύτην	ἐκτησάμην	ὁ	δὲ	Παῦλος	ἔφη
	freedom		obtained		And	Paul	said
G3588	G4174	G3778	G2932	G3588	G1161	G3972	G5346
Ἐγὼ	δὲ	καὶ	γεγέννημαι				
I	And		was free born				
G1473	G1161	G2532	G1080				

