

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 kephalaioū, '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** G3588 **the chief captain** **I** **With a great** **sum**
G611 G5037 G5506 G1473 G4183 G2774

τὴν πολιτείαν ταύτην ἐκτησάμην ὁ δὲ Παῦλος ἔφη

G3588 **freedom** G3778 **obtained** G3588 **And** G1161 **Paul** G3972 **said**
G4174 G2932 G1161 G5346

Ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ γεγέννημαι

I **And** G2532 **was free born**
G1473 G1161 G1080

