

ACTS

of the Holy Spirit

Session #33 – 23:1 – 23:35

I. Paul Speaks to the Sanhedrin (23:1 - 11)

Verse 1

Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said,

*“My brothers, [men and brothers – equal ground]
I have fulfilled my duty to God (politeuomai = to live
as a faithful citizen of heaven)
in all good conscience to this day.”*

Verse 2

At this [?]
the high priest Ananias (“Jehovah has graciously given”)
ordered those standing near Paul
to strike him on the mouth.

What were they so upset about?
Paul was on trial for sedition against the Jews, so stating his
clear conscience means that he is claiming his innocence.

Who is this man – High Priest Ananias?

- Son of Nedebeaus
- High Priest from 47 – 59 AD
- The *Pulpit Commentary* described him as "a violent, haughty, gluttonous, and rapacious man, and yet looked up to by the Jews"
- Josephus the historian claimed that he was known to take tithes from the normal priesthood for himself and he was famous for paying bribes to the Roman government for influence.
- Assassinated by the Sacarii (Jewish) in 66 AD along with his brother Hezekiah
- Son Eliezar ben Hanania became a leader of the “Great Revolt of Judea” (6,000 Romans killed)

Verse 3

Then Paul said to him,

“God will strike you,
you whitewashed wall! [trying to cover over something]
You sit there to judge me
according to the law,
yet you yourself
violate the law
by commanding that I be struck!”

A person cannot
be punished until
he is convicted!
Deut. 25:1-2

Verse 4

Those who were standing near Paul said,
“How dare you insult (loidoreo = curse, revile)
God’s high priest!”

They ignored the injustice and focused on Paul’s response.

Verse 5

Paul replied,

“Brothers,
I did not realize
that he was the high priest;
for it is written:

‘Do not speak evil
about the ruler of your people.’ ” [Ex.22:28]

Why did Paul not know who the High Priest was? Some say...

- 1) He has been out of Jerusalem proper for over 20 years – so he is out of the Jewish political loop,
- 2) His eyesight was weak – meaning he could not see who made the command, or
- 3) He was being sarcastic – A person who acts this way does not look like a High Priest.

Verse 6

Then Paul,
 knowing that some of them were Sadducees
 and the others Pharisees,
 called out in the Sanhedrin,
 “My brothers, [men and brothers]
 I am a Pharisee,
 descended from Pharisees.
 I stand on trial because of the hope
 of the resurrection of the dead.”

Verse 7

When he said this,
 a dispute broke out between the Pharisees
 and the Sadducees,
 and the assembly was divided.

Verse 8

(The Sadducees say that there is 1) no resurrection,
 and that there are 2) neither angels nor 3) spirits,
 but the Pharisees believe all these things.)

Verse 9

There was a great uproar, (krauge = outcry of moans)
 and some of the teachers of the law
 who were Pharisees
 stood up and argued vigorously.
 “We find nothing wrong with this man,” they said.
 “What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?”

The Pharisees seem to be coming to Paul’s defense.

Verse 10

The dispute became so violent
 that the commander was afraid [Roman soldier]
 Paul would be torn to pieces by them.

He ordered the troops to go down
 and take him away from them by force
 and bring him into the barracks.

Verse 11

The following night
 the Lord stood near Paul and said, [physical presence]
 “Take courage! (tharseo = feeling comfort + joy)
 As you have testified (diamartyromai – dia (through) +
 martyr (witness unto death)
 about me in Jerusalem,
 so you must also testify (martyreo) in Rome.”

II. The Jews Plot to Kill Paul (23:12 - 22)

Verse 12

The next morning
 some Jews formed a conspiracy (systrophe = twisting
 together)
 and bound themselves with an oath
 not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

Verse 13

More than forty men were involved in this plot.

The actions/desires of men to end Paul’s ministry there in
 Jerusalem – comes in direct opposition to the promise of God
 that Paul will survive until Rome. Who do you think will win?

We know that Paul will be imprisoned in Caesarea for 2 years –
 but the assurance Paul had of his future must have been a
 powerful support for him through the struggle.

Verse 14

They went to the chief priests
 and the elders and said,
 “We have taken a solemn oath
not to eat anything
until we have killed Paul.”

Their zeal is obvious, but that does not prove that they are right.

Verse 15

*Now then,
 you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander
 to bring him before you
 on the pretext of wanting more accurate
 information about his case.
 We are ready to kill him before he gets here.”*

The assassins want the members of the Sanhedrin to lie.
 The integrity of the Jewish Leader is being tested.

Verse 16

But when the son of Paul’s sister heard of this plot,
 he went into the barracks
 and told Paul.

God uses this to protect Paul and to provide a way out so that he
 can continue to Rome. The Father uses many forms of
 warning/protection

Verse 17

Then Paul called one of the centurions and said,
 “Take this young man to the commander;
 he has something to tell him.”

Verse 18

So he took him to the commander.
The centurion said,
 *“Paul, the prisoner,
 sent for me
 and asked me to bring this young man to you
 because he has something to tell you.”*

Verse 19

The commander took the young man by the hand,
drew him aside and asked,
 “What is it you want to tell me?”

Verse 20

He said:
 *“Some Jews have agreed to ask you
 to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow
 on the pretext of wanting
 more accurate information about him.*

Verse 21

Don't give in to them,
because more than forty of them
are waiting in ambush for him.
They have taken an oath
not to eat or drink until they have killed him.
They are ready now,
waiting for your consent to their request.”

Verse 22

The commander
dismissed the young man
with this warning:
 *“Don't tell anyone
 that you have reported this to me.”*

III. Paul Transferred to Caesarea (23:23 - 35)

Verse 23

Then he called two of his centurions
and ordered them,

*“Get ready a detachment
 of two hundred soldiers,
 seventy horsemen
 and two hundred spearmen*

470 trained
Roman
soldiers just
to escort 1
man!

to go to Caesarea
at nine tonight. [third hour of the night]

Verse 24

Provide horses for Paul
so that he may be taken safely
to Governor Felix. (“happy”)

God not only protects Paul but provides a
Roman parade and a horse!



Who is this man – Antonius Felix?

- Marcus Antonius Felix
- He was a freedman (released slave who gained citizenship) from Greece who was related to Emperor Augustus.
- Given a military command
- Later was made procurator (governor) of Samaria
- Was appointed procurator of Judea in 53 AD by emperor Claudius
- Corrupt and cruel in his leadership
- Josephus claimed that Felix ordered the assassination of the High Priest Jonathan by the Sicarii
- In 58 AD Felix was recalled but not convicted of any crimes.

Verse 25

He wrote a letter as follows:

Verse 26

Claudius Lysias, (lysias = releaser – a tribune or Roman cohort)

To His Excellency,
Governor Felix:
Greetings.

Verse 27

This man was seized by the Jews
and they were about to kill him,
but I came with my troops
and rescued him,
for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen.

Verse 28

I wanted to know why they were accusing him,
so I brought him to their Sanhedrin.

Verse 29

I found that the accusation
had to do with questions
about their law,
but there was no charge against him
that deserved death or imprisonment.

If the book of Acts is the legal brief written for Paul's defense
before Caesar – this line would make clear that other Roman
officials believe that the penalty should NOT be death.

Verse 30

When I was informed
of a plot to be carried out against the man,
I sent him to you at once.
I also ordered his accusers
to present to you their case against him.

Verse 31

So the soldiers,
carrying out their orders,
took Paul with them
during the night
and brought him as far as Antipatris.

[about 25 miles]



Verse 32

The next day
they let the cavalry go on with him,
while they returned to the barracks.

Verse 33

When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea,
they delivered the letter to the governor
and handed Paul over to him.



Verse 34

The governor read the letter
and asked what province he was from.
Learning that he was from Cilicia,

Verse 35

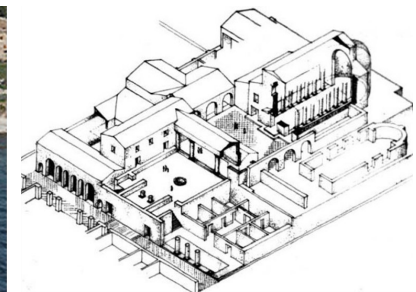
he said,

*"I will hear your case
when your accusers get here."*

Then he ordered that Paul
be kept under guard in Herod's palace.

Cilicia was in the region of Felix'
responsibility – so he would have to deal
with this issue.

This was Paul's first appearance before a
person at this high of position. (Acts 9:15)



- Herod's Praetorium in Caesarea
- The next two years in prison in Caesarea
- Another five plus years in prison in Rome
- Paul has been free to roam and ministry, but now he will end his ministry as an author and prisoner of Rome.
- The captivity of Rome establishes the environment for Paul to write seven books of the New Testament