

### Outline

#### I. Paul before the Sanhedrin (vv. 1-10)

- A. *Paul said that he had lived in good conscience (v. 1)*
- B. *Ananias commanded that Paul be struck on the mouth (vv. 2-5)*
  - 1. Paul rebuked Ananias (v. 3)
  - 2. The people rebuked Paul for reviling the High Priest (vv. 4-5)
- C. *Paul stated that he was condemned because of the hope of the resurrection from the dead (vv. 6-10)*
  - 1. He did this knowing that the group was made up of Pharisees and Sadducees (v. 6)
  - 2. Caused dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees (vv. 7-10a)
    - a. Because of their difference on the resurrection (v. 8)
    - b. Pharisees cried out that they found no fault in Paul (v. 9)
  - 3. Commander had Paul taken to the Barracks lest he be killed (v. 10b)

#### II. The Lord Appeared to Paul At Night (v. 11)

- A. *Lord told Paul to be of good cheer (v. 11)*
- B. *Lord told Paul that he would testify of him in Rome (v. 11)*

#### III. A Plot Against Paul Revealed (vv. 12-22)

- A. *Forty (plus) Jews took an oath to kill Paul (vv. 12-15)*
  - 1. Oath was not to eat or drink anything until they killed Paul (vv. 12-13)
  - 2. Plotted with the chief priest and elders to have Paul brought to the council so they could kill him on the way (vv. 14-15)
- B. *Paul's nephew spoiled the plot (vv. 16-22)*
  - 1. Informed Paul (v. 16)
  - 2. Paul sent him to the Commander (vv. 17-22)

#### IV. Paul Delivered to Caesarea (vv. 23-25)

- A. *The commander prepared protection to bring Paul to Felix (vv. 23-24)*
- B. *A letter from Lysias to Felix was sent along with Paul (vv. 25-30)*
- C. *Paul delivered to Felix (vv. 31-35)*

## Key Verse that Summarizes the Chapter

### Acts 23:6

But when Paul perceived that 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; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"

Paul the prisoner, as he is called (v. 18), is taken before the Sanhedrin council for a hearing that didn't last as long as they must have anticipated. The meeting ends in disruption and confusion. The hatred against Paul is so great that some forty people devised a plot to kill him in an ambush, which failed. Claudias Lysias rushes him to Caesarea to Felix the governor.

### Paul before the Sanhedrin (vv. 1-10)

*Paul said that he had lived in good conscience* (v. 1). Paul boldly told the council that he had lived in all good conscience before God. He had always been sincere and always done what he thought to be right (cf. Acts 24:16; 26:9-10).<sup>1</sup> It took courage to make such a bold claim of innocence before the council. To fellow believers this was an honorable statement. But to the council it was an insult to such a "revered" body.

A good conscience is essential (Rom. 14:23), however, it must be educated by the word (Rom. 2:15). The conscience is only as good as the knowledge we have.

*Ananias commanded that Paul be struck on the mouth* (vv. 2-5). Ananias, the high priest, commanded that Paul be struck on the mouth to silence him for making such a claim (v. 2). Such treatment was contrary to the law (Lev. 19:15, 35). Yet, Ananias and the rest were going to judge Paul "according to the law" (v. 3). Thus, Paul responded by saying, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall!" – a charge of hypocrisy (v. 3). That took courage to state in the presence of the council.

Paul was rebuked by those who were standing nearby. They asked, "Do you revile God's high priest?" (v. 4). It was a violation of the law to speak disrespectful of the ruler of God's people (Exo. 22:28). So, Paul was wrong to do so.

Paul said he did not know Ananias was the high priest (v. 5). It may be that he didn't see who had given the order to strike him. It may be that he didn't know who was high priest at the time, having been a stranger to the Jewish religion for about 25 years. It could be that he knew who was high priest, but didn't recognize him (he may not have had the high priest's garments on). Whatever the case, Paul is stating that he was wrong to rebuke him and cites Exodus 22:28 as evidence. It obviously took courage to admit he was wrong.

*Paul stated that he was condemned because of the hope of the resurrection from the dead* (vv. 6-10). The heart of the problem with Paul was that he preached the resurrection from the dead (v. 6). The resurrection of Christ was the center of his preaching. If he was raised, then he is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4). If he was raised, then all must accept and follow him. Those opposed to Paul did not like the consequences of what he taught.

<sup>1</sup> From this we learn that a clear conscience can be wrong. Thus, sincerity is not enough to be saved. It is possible to do wrong and not be bothered.

Paul, knew that part of the council was made up of Pharisees and part of them were Sadducees (v. 6). These two sects stood together against Paul. Paul used their differences to disrupt what would not have been a fair hearing anyway. So he firmly stated he was a Pharisee and was being called in question about the resurrection (v. 6). The Pharisees believed in a resurrection from the dead (as well as believing in angels and spirits). The Sadducees did not believe any of that.

With Paul's statement they are now divided and arguing rather than standing against Paul (vv. 9-10). The Pharisees defended Paul saying he had done no wrong and suggesting that an angel or spirit might have spoken to him. In that case, they didn't want to fight against God (v. 9). This was really a defense of themselves and a stand against the Sadducees rather than a vindication of Paul!<sup>2</sup>

Because the dissension was so great, the commander took Paul by force to protect him and brought him into the barracks (v. 10). This council meeting didn't quite go like they planned.

### **The Lord Appeared to Paul at Night (v. 11)**

*The Lord told Paul to be of good cheer* (v.11). The following night the Lord told Paul to be of good cheer ("take courage" NASB). He, no doubt, had to be discouraged and uncertain about the future. "Paul never needed Jesus more than now."<sup>3</sup>

*The Lord told Paul that he would testify of Him in Rome* (v. 11). The reason Paul should take courage is that his life would be spared so that he would testify of Christ in Rome. Paul should take courage because his life would be spared in order for him to testify of Christ in Rome.<sup>4</sup>

### **A Plot against Paul Revealed (vv. 12-22)**

*Forty (plus) Jews took an oath to kill Paul* (vv. 12-15). "Disappointed at having let Paul slip through their fingers, one group of zealots determined that they would engineer a second opportunity of killing him, and they would not fail this time."<sup>5</sup> The next morning (after the Lord assured Paul) several Jews (more than 40) took an oath saying that they would not eat or drink until they had killed Paul (v. 12).<sup>6</sup> The degree of hatred for Paul and his message is seen.

They worked with the chief priests and elders having them call for Paul again (claiming further inquiry was needed) then ambushing him on the way.

2 This is not uncommon. Quiet often those who stand with you may be with you only because you are against one of their enemies. The sad part is that this happens in the church.

3 A. T. Robertson, *Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft & Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament. Copyright (c) 1985 by Broadman Press).

4 Acts 19:21.

5 F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, 457.

6 You would think that since they failed, surely they starved to death. Not so. "The Mishnah makes provision for relief from such vows as could not be fulfilled 'by reason of constraint' (Nedarim iii. 1, 3)" (F. F. Bruce, *ibid*, 457).

*Paul's nephew spoiled the plot* (vv. 16-22). Paul's sister's son<sup>7</sup> found out about the plot and told Paul (v. 16). Paul asked one of the soldiers (a centurion) to take his nephew to the commander (Claudias Lysias) so the young man could tell him something (v. 17). So, he was taken to the commander and informed him of the plot (vv. 18-21). The commander told Paul's nephew to keep this quiet (v. 22). He then prepared to securely remove Paul from the danger.

Here we get a glimpse of how God's providence works. God had promised to spare Paul's life (v. 11). However, God used the nephew and the commander's scheme to deliver Paul. "Paul did not 'sit with folded hands' but he did what he could to secure his own safety."<sup>8</sup>

### **Paul Delivered to Caesarea (vv. 23-25)**

*The commander prepared protection to bring Paul to Felix* (vv. 23-24). The Commander, Claudias Lysias, commanded two of his centurions to get 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearman and mounts (animals) for Paul to ride at the third hour (9:00 PM).

*A letter from Lysias to Felix was sent along with Paul* (vv. 25-30). The letter he wrote was accurate. However, he omitted the part concerning his plan to scourge Paul but then learned he was a Roman. Lysias painted himself in a favorable light. To be fair, Claudias Lysias did protect Paul from the time he learned of his Roman citizenship.

He stated in the letter that he had found nothing wherein Paul was worthy of death or even imprisonment (v. 29). The only thing mentioned against Paul was that the Jews had questions concerning "their law" (v. 29).

*Paul delivered to Felix* (vv. 31-35). The soldiers escorted Paul from Jerusalem to Antipatris<sup>9</sup> where they stayed the night. Being away from the danger of the possible ambush, the soldiers turned back and the horsemen continued on with Paul whom they delivered along with the letter to Felix (vv. 31-32).

Felix read the letter and asked what province Paul was from. He was told that Paul was from Cilicia (v. 34). Felix said he would hear the matter when Paul's accusers came. He commanded that Paul be kept in Herod's Praetorium (v. 35).<sup>10</sup>

From the standpoint of the Jews, little had been accomplished in stopping Paul.

<sup>7</sup> This is the only reference to Paul's family. We know nothing more about his sister or her son.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Harkrider, *Acts A Study of Conversions Book II*, 112.

<sup>9</sup> This city is about halfway between Jerusalem and Caesarea.

<sup>10</sup> "Herod's palace. Built by Herod the Great. Judaea being now a Roman province, the palace of its former kings had become the governor's official residence. It thus appears that Paul was leniently dealt with, and not cast into the common prison" (M. R. Vincent, *Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

## Questions

1. Why was Paul struck in the mouth? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Was Paul wrong to rebuke Ananias? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. List at least three things that Paul did in this chapter that took real courage to do. \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. What was the heart of the controversy that brought Paul before the council? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. How did Paul use the differences of the Sadducees and Pharisees? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
6. Why did the Pharisees defend Paul? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. What assurance was given to Paul (v. 11)? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. What was the plan to kill Paul and who was involved? \_\_\_\_\_  
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9. What do you learn about providence from this chapter? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
10. How accurate was the letter Claudias Lysias wrote? \_\_\_\_\_  
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