

# Courage in God's Word

## Paul Testifies before the Sanhedrin and the Governor - Acts 23 & 24

**Icebreaker: Tell about a time when God gave you courage in hard times?**

### Paul Before the Sanhedrin

**Acts 22:30** *The commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews. So, the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the members of the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.*

**Acts 23:1** *Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day." 2 At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!"*

**4** *Those who were standing near Paul said, "How dare you insult God's high priest!"*

**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.' [[a](#)]"*

**6** *Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead." 7 When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8 (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)*

**9** *There was a great uproar, 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?" 10 The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid 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.*

1. What does the statement, "I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience, to this day," mean to you? Why did the High Priest order Paul to be struck?
2. Why do you suppose that the narrative includes the point of the High Priest ordering Paul to be struck on the mouth? What does this indicate about the character of the Sanhedrin/High Priest?
3. Why did Paul bring up the issue of the resurrection? (Matthew 10:16) What Biblical evidence do you know of, for the resurrection? (Psalm 16:10; Romans 10:9,10)
4. How important do you think that the issue of the resurrection is?
5. How could people reading the same Bible reach such different beliefs?
6. Why do religious people get angry that they are willing to fight or end relationships over their beliefs? What is right for Christians to do when we disagree with others?

**11** *The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."*

## **The Plot to Kill Paul**

**12** The next morning some Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. **13** More than forty men were involved in this plot. **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. **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."

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

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

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

**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. **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."

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

7. How does the word of the Lord to Paul in verse 11, help him to face what was going to happen? (also Acts 18:9) What elements of this account demonstrate the sovereignty of God in Paul's life?

8. How does this apply to your life?

9. What do you think about 40 men taking an oath to kill someone, then asking the chief priests and elders to assist, versus Jesus command to love those with whom we disagree? How is religion different than a relationship with Jesus Christ? (Luke 6:27)

### **Paul Transferred to Caesarea**

**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[b] to go to Caesarea at nine tonight.**24** Provide horses for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix."

**25** He wrote a letter as follows:

**26** Claudius Lysias,

To His Excellency, Governor Felix:

Greetings.

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

**31** So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris. **32** The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. **33** When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. **34** The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, **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.

10. How do you see the provision of God in Paul's escort to Caesarea?

## Paul's Trial Before Felix

**Acts 24:1** Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. **2** When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: "We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. **3** Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. **4** But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.

**5** "We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect **6** and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. **7** [\[a\]](#) **8** By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him."

**9** The other Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.

**10** When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: "I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. **11** You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. **12** My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. **13** And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. **14** However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, **15** and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. **16** So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

**17** "After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. **18** I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. **19** But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. **20** Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin— **21** unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: 'It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.'"

**22** Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. "When Lysias the commander comes," he said, "I will decide your case." **23** He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.

**24** Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. **25** As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." **26** At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him.

**27** When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

11. The religious leaders accused Paul of starting riots. What did they lack in the way of evidence? What undermined their accusations? (Acts 23:25-30)

12. Felix was acquainted with the Way. Felix's wife was Jewish. Felix called for Paul and listened to him as he talked about Jesus. When Paul started talking about righteousness, self-control and the Judgment to come Felix became afraid and cut off the conversation. Why would Felix want to hear Paul talk about Jesus, but become afraid when Paul mentioned righteousness, self-control and judgment?

13. How did Felix and his wife respond to Paul's defense? Do you put off decisions, like Felix, or do you embrace the conviction and surrender to it? Is there anything that God has convicted you, but you have put off dealing with?

14. In his sermon, Pastor Dave pointed out that real courage is founded in the Word of God. It is our source of courage, the ultimate weapon, and it produces conviction. How do you use the Word of God to find the courage to face life?

15. How would you share the gospel with someone who asked you? (1 Peter 3:15)  
Would you like someone to teach you to share your faith? **(Contact the church  
office for information on discipleship training.)**