

Acts 23:1-35

“And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. 3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? 4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God’s high priest? 5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. 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: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. 7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. 9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees’ part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. 10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain [the Tribune], fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded then soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle. 11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. 12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. 14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. 15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you tomorrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him. 16 And when Paul’s sister’s son

heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. 17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him*, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. 18 So he took him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto *him*, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. 19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him* aside privately, and ask *him*, What is that thou hast to tell me? 20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. 21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. 22 So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him*, See *thou* tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me. 23 And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; 24 and provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor. 25 And he wrote a letter after this manner: 26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix *sendeth* greeting. 27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. 28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council. 29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. 30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell. 31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris. 32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: 33 who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. 34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia; 35 I will hear thee, said he,

when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall."

Introduction

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"Now, there's no chapter break of course when it was written, **"And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."** (verse 1) now look, I'm sure that Claudius Lysias said [to Paul] *'I hate to tell you this, but you're speaking Greek today, ok, because Hebrew's Greek to me, do not go in there and speak Hebrew again, I need to know what to tell Felix. So, if you're going in there today, you're speaking Greek.'* Paul, look, this is the 5th testimony to the Sanhedrin that we know of, in regards to the Kingdom of God. Jesus stood in front of the Sanhedrin and gave testimony of God's Kingdom. Peter and John, after the lame man was healed stood in front of the Sanhedrin and gave testimony. The twelve were then brought and stood in front of the Sanhedrin, and gave testimony. Stephen, chapter 7 [of Acts] gave one of the most remarkable testimonies to the Sanhedrin. And now Paul, five times specifically we know, that the Lord loves this group of men enough that he gives them testimony after testimony after testimony, this is five incidents we ever heard of, five the number of grace. Paul now, to give this incredible testimony. Now after this scene, if we go into this chapter, the Sanhedrin passes off the New Testament, we don't see them anymore, this is the last we're going to see of them. And the Lord Jesus makes sure that they get equal testimony. Remember, Nicodemus turned to Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea had turned to him. Many of the priests that were officiating when he was crucified and the veil was torn had come to faith. Barabbas was a Levite, a believer. So, no doubt the Lord loves these people. He puts Paul in front of them here. Within 12 years, 70AD, the city's going to be destroyed, the Temple is going to be ruined. Here God is still being gracious. [And God is being gracious by having the Jerusalem church, as the headquarters church in Judea, remain within Jerusalem and Judea as a living witness with an estimated 100,000

believers living in their midst until most of them fled north and out of Judea, my estimate, around 67AD when the apostle John emigrated north to Ephesus with Mary, Jesus' mother.]

Paul Begins His 2nd Attempt To Give His Testimony To The Sanhedrin

Look what it says, **“Paul, earnestly beholding the council,”** I think he was earnestly beholding the council because there were some familiar faces there. No doubt, some faces had changed, it's been over 20 years since Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin. But there are familiar faces that he still knows, no doubt. And he says to them, **“Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” (verse 1b)** which is respectable, but it's friendly, **‘Men and brethren.’** He makes himself equal with them. He says **“I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.”** I don't know if we can say that. Now, by the way, “conscience” is not the test, the Scripture is always the test, Paul would speak of the conscience 23 times. Paul, no doubt, in chapter 9, ‘*in all good conscience*’ was persecuting the Church, he believed that was the right thing to do. We're not sure if he's saying here, ‘*he I've done everything I've done with the right motives, I just didn't have all the information,*’ or is he saying ‘*since I've been a believer that I've lived in all good conscience,*’ we don't know, but that's just a remarkable statement. You and I, I've been saved 27 years, since 1972, I know Paul, now over 20 years now for him to say **‘I have lived every day in all good conscience before God,’** is a remarkable thing to say. And look, if our conscience's condemn us, he's greater than our conscience, **‘if we confess our sins he's faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’** Conscience can condemn when it shouldn't be condemning. But it is wonderful, you know, my son, when he was in Bible school he would call me, and he was a bit disillusioned in Bible school, and I said “*You know, you're there, not to learn Bible, you've been sitting in church your whole life, you're going to learn Bible for your whole life, you're there to get closer to Jesus, so find a place to get alone.*” And I remember one night we had this long conversation, he said “*Dad, one of my Bible teachers said, If your conscience is pure before the Lord, that you can have a better walk with him,*” he said, “*Do you think that's true?*” I said, “*You know, I*

don't, in the sense that the one he forgives the most is the one he loves the most, look at Paul and how he slaughtered the Church, and to that degree, he realized the depth and the power of God's love and forgiveness." I said, "Look at David, and the problem was, David was never the king or the father that he was before he fell, but he was a much better Psalmist, and that's what we've all gleaned from him this day." But I said, "There were men, like Joseph, in Genesis, and like Daniel, who were sterling in their character, and changed the course of human history, who walked before the Lord and didn't have to worry about that question." And he said "That's the way I want to walk before the Lord." And I think that he does. And I said "You need to, when I got saved out of the world, I was immoral, I was a dog, I used substances, all kinds, I was intolerant, I just enjoyed knocking somebody down, and you don't have to have any of those things hanging in your memory." I said, "You know, my conscience doesn't bother me, I'm justified, sanctified and glorified in the complete work of Jesus Christ, and it makes me love him with all of my heart, you go for it, you go for it, you do this right, you do this right." He says **"I have lived in all good conscience"** what a great way to live **"before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by to smite him on the mouth." (verses 1-2)** he's hitting the wrong guy, first of all, Paul doesn't take to this kind of stuff very well. Ananias is not Anus or Caiaphas from the Gospels, this man has been in power as high priest about nine years by this time. The Talmud tells us he was an extreme glutton, history tells us he was a scoundrel, a ruthless man, so sold himself out to the Romans, he sold off so much, and in 66AD, when there started to be a Jewish uprising, remember the Romans in 70AD ended that, him and his brother Hezekiah ran and hid in the aqueducts, and the Jewish people assassinated him, within a number of years of this. So, we look at this guy, here he is, he's going to stand before Paul, and he's going to hear this incredible testimony, which he's going to decline, he's going to turn away from. It was his eternity, he had little idea that within 8 years, 9 years he's going to be assassinated, he's going to be dead. We don't know if he's offended because Paul said **'I've lived in all good conscience,'** or because he's called them "brethren" and made himself equal with them, or maybe just because his conscience is bothering him, but he gives a command, says **'hit this guy in the mouth,'** and they strike him in the mouth. Jesus, remember, received the same treatment, it tells us in 1st Peter that when he was reviled and reviled not again. He committed himself to the bishop and shepherd of our

souls, I know one thing for sure, I ain't Jesus, because I immediately, you know, I want to respond when somebody does something like that. You read the Book of Galatians, it says the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, it's always the flesh first (cf. Galatians 5:17). When somebody cuts me off in traffic it is not the Spirit first. If somebody cuts me off in traffic it's not like in my heart I say 'O bless you, O bless you, I'm so glad it's me that you cut off, not somebody else who would be angry,' no it's the flesh first, 'You jerk! Where'd you get your license!' and then 'Ok, ok, Lord, I know, he's created in your image and likeness, you should have given him eyeballs...' It's always the flesh that comes up first, and Paul is like us, he gets hit in the mouth, to him, the high priest, **"Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall:"** you gotta like Paul, **"for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" (verse 3)** Now he calls him a whited wall, this was the time of the Feast, and they would whitewash the sepulchers and the walls, anything that would be defiling. They'd just whitewash, cover up that which was unclean, and it became an idiom or insult, and that's what he does here. Jesus had called this group, in Matthew chapter 23 in the scathing address he gives, **'You are whited sepulchers, you know, outwardly you look nice and clean, but inwardly you're filled with dead men's bones.'** I wonder if Paul was there and heard that, and it had stuck in his heart. But he just goes off here. And my personal feeling is, he gets a little bit in the flesh here. You don't have to believe that, I think I'd like to believe it so I can get in a little once in awhile. He says **'Thou sittest in judgment of me according to the law, and then you command me to be smitten contrary to the law?'** **"And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."** (verses 4-5) **'I didn't know, brethren, that he was the high priest...'** and Paul did have bad eyes, we know that, I don't think he's lying here, if he'd have recognized. If the Romans were there, the high priest would not have been in this position to preside over this meeting, it would have been the Romans, so Paul says, *'You know, I didn't know.'* Isn't it interesting, he respects the office, even though he doesn't respect the man. [In the Navy we were always taught *"You salute the uniform, not the man."*] Isn't it interesting here. He says **'I know what the Scripture says, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.'**

Paul Starts His Third Riot In Two Days

“But when Paul perceived that the 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: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.” (verse 6) one part of this crowd were Sadducees, the ruling party, and the other part were Pharisees, which were the majority party, though the Sadducees had power, **‘He cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee,’** he doesn’t say *‘he was a Pharisee,’* he still considered himself, **‘I am a Pharisee, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, born of the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised on the 8th day,’** we read in Philipians. **“I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.” (verse 6c)** **“And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.” (verse 7)** Now, evidently, Paul at this time, it says he perceived, God gave him wisdom. Jesus had said, in **Mark 13** and other places, **‘When you’re brought before rulers and councils for my name’s sake, don’t take anxious thought about what you will say, because in that hour the words that you should speak will be given to you.’** And the words that he should have spoken were not *‘God will hit you, you whitewashed wall!’* Now he’s realizing, and God is giving him wisdom, he perceives no doubt through the Spirit, *‘Hey, the ruling party here, they’re Sadducees, Sadducees don’t believe in the resurrection, they don’t believe in angels, they don’t believe in spirits, they don’t believe in life after death.’* You know, they embrace the Torah, but only in the sense of keeping the Law. They were hedonist because they had no sense of judgment, they had no sense of passing into eternity and standing before God, they were hedonistic, they were carnal. And the other group, the Pharisees that had been born out of the Babylonian captivity and wanted to preserve Orthodoxy, they embraced not just the Torah, but the Prophets and so forth, and they believed that there is a resurrection [cf. Ezekiel 37:1-14 is one major prophecy the Jews take literally as one of their main or central resurrection prophecies given in the Prophecy Scrolls], they believe that there are angels, there are spirits, and Paul says **‘Hey, I’m a Pharisee, since when has that been wrong? And I’m called into**

question today because I believe in the resurrection? What's the problem here?' And so the Pharisees, who didn't like the Sadducees anyhow, because there were less Sadducees but they were the ruling party, then some of the Pharisees said 'Ynaaa, what is the problem here, what's wrong with this?' he says 'I'm called into question because of this? I'm a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, and I'm being called into question about the resurrection?' "And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided." (verse 7) [Paul had just created a verbal Donnybrook, where the gloves drop to the ice, *and here we go!*] **"For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both." (verse 8) Now look, I'm going to tell you something, belief determines morality. One of the reasons the world we live in hates the idea of Creation, and in these days is against all scientific evidence, is because it implies accountability, if there is a Creator, then there is one day of giving of account, and that is the thing that they hate. It is not an intellectual exercise, it is a problem of the heart. And the Sadducees in Jerusalem, the ruling party, they were corrupt, they were immoral, there's all kinds of things, if you study and read about them. The Sadducees, they say there's no resurrection, no angels, no spirits, but the Pharisees, they believe in all of that. **"And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God." (verse 9)** the scribes, they were the guys who copied the Scripture, they knew it, **'we find no evil in this man, and if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.'** **"And when there arose a great dissention,"** now the "dissention" is there's an uproar again, poor Claudius, this is his third riot in two days. **"And when there arose a great dissention, the chief captain"** the Tribune, Claudius Lysias **"fearing"** look at this, **"lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle." (verse 11)** look, this is the most prestigious assembly in Israel, these are the greatest religious leaders in the country. These are the guys that should drink tea with the little finger up in the air. These are the most refined, polite, prestigious leaders in the country, and the Romans say **'We'd better get him outa there before they tear him to pieces.'** [There's only one person who was part of the**

Sanhedrin that truly was refined and prestigious, and that was Gamaliel, and he probably wasn't there, may have been dead by now, but he certainly wouldn't have attended this, because his advice, which they didn't heed, was to leave these Christians, Messianic Jewish believers alone.] Isn't it funny? **“fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them,” ‘he commanded the soldiers, Run down and get him and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the castle, the Antonio Fortress again.’** What a scene.

Jesus Comes To Encourage Paul In His Cell

“And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.” (verse 11) The night following, all of this uproar, Paul in the Antonio Fortress, is in custody, we don't get the sense he's in a dungeon, he's in some type of custody in prison, and as he's there, thinking *‘Lord, I'm tired, I thought I had a great opportunity yesterday, I started a riot, shouldn't have said the word “Gentiles,” thought I had a great opportunity today Lord in front of the Sanhedrin, and everything blew up in my face again. O Lord, I love these people, I grew up with them, my heart burns for them.’* And as he's there, no doubt he's disheartened, because the Lord mentions it, as he's there it says **“the Lord stood by him,”** what was that like? I'd have had a heart attack. Look, he doesn't have a lightbulb in his cell, you have to understand this, you know he's probably in the dark praying, and all of a sudden you sense somebody there with you, **“and the Lord stood by him,”** this is the third or fourth time now the Lord has come to Paul, how remarkable. **“and said, Be of good cheer,”** that's not *“cheer up, keep your chin up, cheerio, hip, hip!”* this is literally **“Take courage Paul,”** because he was losing heart, it's tender **“Take courage, Paul,”** **“for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.”** He doesn't say *‘You blew it, man, I love ya, there's grace, so much for living in front of me in good conscience, that's out the window now,’* Jesus doesn't say any of that. He said **‘You've given a testimony here, Paul.’** You know, Paul's sitting there thinking *‘Cheer up, take courage, I've started a riot, three times I'm in prison,’* the Lord said, **‘No, you've given testimony, that's exactly what I wanted, the Sanhedrin has**

heard their final testimony, Paul, be of good cheer, be encouraged,' "for thou hast testified," Paul, "for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." (verse 11b) God's design, he hadn't blown it. He must come out of this situation, we'll follow him to Caesarea, he has to go in custody, evidently Luke is there with him for almost two years. He must tell Luke, **'Luke, we're going to Rome.'** ...Luke must have said *'Are you sure?'* and Paul said **'Luke I'm telling you, the Lord stood with me. I don't know what the holdup is, but we're going to Rome.'** No doubt it was during that time in Caesarea that Luke continued to go back to Jerusalem, and talk to Mary, talk to eye-witnesses, began to construct his Gospel, and put together the testimony of those that he talked to. But Paul, no doubt, communicated his very personal experience to Luke. Look, he stands with us, the same Book, the Word of God tells us that he'll never leave us or forsake us, that he's with us always, to the end of the age. And some of you say *'Well I don't feel him, I don't feel him, the Bible says he's with me, I don't feel him.'* Well you know where Jesus is when you don't feel him? He's standing right next to you, not wanting you to feel him, that's where he's at, wanting you to mature and wanting you to grow. You know, my girls are ten years apart, I had boys inbetween, but the girls are ten years apart. And it was funny, you know I got to watch and to study, and they taught me more theology than anyone else. If God loves me more than I love them then I still got a lot to learn. But Hannah, when she was 3, 4, 5 years old she would say *'I need Daddy love, I need some Daddy love,'* and she would snuggle up, and what she was saying she needed me to hug or she needed me to hold her, she needed some Daddy love. And that was very physical to her, she needed to feel the sensation. Whereas at the same time, Joanna was 16 years old, and she would hang out in the hallway here with her 16-year-old cool friends, and if I'd walk up to her and say *'Let me give you some Daddy love,'* she would say *'Get out of here!'* because she wanted to be cool. But the truth is, Joanna as 16 understood more of the sacrifice her mom and I made to care for her, to send her to Christian school, to help her get everything lined up in her life, things that we did for her, she understood more of that. Younger and immature, *'I need Daddy love,'* and like a good Father he condescends to us, *'Lord, I need your presence, I need to feel that,'* and there are times someone even like Paul needs that, and he condescends. But this is not based on whether we feel him or not, when we're not feeling him is because he's wanting us to grow up,

he's standing there right next to us not letting us feel him, because he wants us to believe, because he has said to us, **'and heaven and earth are going to pass away, his Word is never going to pass away, the grass withers, the flower perishes, but the Word of our God stands forever,'** he wants us to believe that though we feel him or not, he is with us, and he never leaves us, and he never forsakes us. That is part of maturity. Because, you're right, look, when I was a new Christian, sometimes the way I knew he was with me, is I got goosebumps, I mean, that's a real Biblical test of whether God's with you. But he was gracious enough. Sometimes when I was first saved, I would say *'O Lord, what should I do,'* and boom, it [the Bible] would fall open, falls open to Hebrews 6 or 10, it would always blow your mind. But you know, you'd want it to fall open somewhere. And he condescends, we're his children, we're his kids, he stoops down to us, he gives us those things, he's that tender. But as we grow and as we mature, our testimony is to be based on his Word, it never changes, it never yields, it is intolerant, it is Truth. I appreciate that so much. And it tells me that I'm the apple of his eye, he tells me that I can sit alone and lift my voice and say *'Father, Father, being a son is way higher than being a pastor, Father.'* When I get to heaven [into the Kingdom of Heaven, wherever it might be located (cf. Revelation 21:1-23)] the worship leaders will still have a job, I got nothing to do when I get to heaven, I'm going to go back to leading worship again. Be sensitive, maybe he'll stand with you this evening. Paul would say at the end of his life, things haven't changed for him, **'All men have forsaken me, but the Lord himself stood with me,'** when he gave his final testimony before Nero. It is my prayer every Sunday, *'Don't you let me go up there alone, I'm right over here by the wall, don't let me go up there [in front of everybody] alone, I'm in 2nd Timothy, you know where I'm at, your Word is true Lord, you go up there with me, don't you dare send me up there alone, Lord.'* That would be a terrible experience for everybody. And he's faithful to be with us, he never leaves us or forsakes us. What a Saviour, what a God we have. So read ahead, in the rest of chapter 23, chapter 24, there's some incredible things, we're going to get to the Euroclydon, if you don't know what the Euroclydon is shame on you, it's not a ride at the amusement park, read ahead...

In review

We have come as far as verse 11 in chapter 23, if you've been following along. Paul, finally getting to Jerusalem, longing to get to Jerusalem, years earlier wanting to remain in Jerusalem. Chapter 22 tells us that the Lord told him to depart, that they wouldn't listen to his testimony. He has made a circuit of years, then back to Jerusalem several times with offerings from the Gentiles, the big meeting in Jerusalem in Acts 15 in regards to the Gentiles. But now he has longed to come to be there on the Feast of Pentecost, said he knew the Holy Spirit was witnessing that bonds and afflictions awaited him, that did not move him. Agabus had come and met him at Caesarea at the house of Philip and bound him with his own garments and said **'So shall the man who owns this garment go bound to Jerusalem by the Gentiles,'** that's exactly the situation he's in this evening as we pick up here in chapter 23, verse 11. He had already written Romans, Romans chapter 9 the first three verses Paul says **'I'm always troubled in my spirit, I'm in heaviness, I wish myself accursed from Christ for my own countrymen, for the Jews.'** And he was passionate. So he's in an environment where he thinks, *'This is finally where I wanted to be, I understand their hearts, I understand their theology, they know that I was zealous against Christianity, I'm the perfect guy to deliver this message.'* And of course, as he begins to speak, a riot begins, they accuse him of bringing Gentiles into the Courts and being against Moses, and as that has calmed down he's taken to the steps of the Antonio Fortress, he asks if he might speak to them, the Tribune whose over 1,000 men said **'Aren't you this Egyptian?'** he says **'No, let me speak to them,'** he starts to speak in Hebrew, they settle down, they listen, he starts to share, **'I'm from the School of Gamaliel,'** they knew who he was, and when he gets to the fact that God has sent him to the Gentiles, when he says that word, a riot erupts again, you remember, this Tribune Claudius Lysias brings him into the Antonio Fortress, which we visit when we go to Israel today, the remains of it, and there he told the Centurion to bind him and to scourge him, Paul said **'I'm a Roman citizen,'** they realized that they should never have done that, they unbound him, and Claudius Lysias realizes then **'I need to refer him then to Felix,'** who was the Roman Procurator in Caesarea. But he knows he can't send him without exact accusations, very important to the Romans. So he says let me meet again with the Sanhedrin, the Jewish leaders, and hear the accusations, and he told Paul **'Don't talk Hebrew this time, talk Greek so I know what's going on.'** And that erupts into a third riot in two days. Now Paul, we find him in the cell here,

in a Roman prison, he's incarcerated, no doubt I believe at the lowest point in his life since he's saved, feeling discouraged, feeling as though he's failed, I believe that, because it says that after these things were over, Jesus stood by him, and said to him, **"Be of good courage, Paul."** I think that betrays what was going on in the heart of Paul, he was discouraged. I think he's at a very low point. And he says to him, **'You've given testimony here in Jerusalem, and now you're also going to give testimony in Rome.'** And Paul realizes **'Lord, you know exactly where I'm at, you know exactly what I'm going through, you know my heart, I've felt so forsaken.'** And the Lord was there, to be with him. Not James, not Peter, not John or some of the others, it's the Lord that stood with him.

Paul Is Saved From A Conspiracy Against His Life, The Romans Take Him By Night To Caesarea

Now, that brings us to verse 12, and it's interesting, you think if the Lord appeared to you and told you he was taking you to Rome, that things would kind of clear up and you wouldn't have any problems. The next verse says **"And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul."** (verse 12) they put themselves under *"an anathema."* Now the verse before this says **'The Lord appeared and said Paul, cheer up, be of good courage, you're going to Rome,'** the next verse says **'there's 40 guys that decided they're not gonna eat or drink till they kill him.'** **"And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. And they came"** these 40+ men **"to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul."** (verses 13-14) **'It's him or us, we can't take it, with great zeal they've done this.'** Now, the chief priests and the elders have the right, if they want to, to dissolve the oath they've taken, and they let them go forward with it. Now they're telling the chief priests what they should do, **"Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him."** (verse 15) **"And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait,**

he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.” (verse 16)

Now this is an interesting verse, comes out of nowhere. Paul's sister's son, Paul has a nephew in Jerusalem. Is Paul's sister also in Jerusalem? We don't know that. Was Paul's nephew sent to Jerusalem like he was, to study in the School of Gamaliel? We don't know that. Are Paul's sister and her son believers? I would imagine you're not around uncle Paul very long, you're bound to hear the Truth. We don't know that. At least this nephew loves and respects Paul enough that he's not going to let this conspiracy go forward. Now probably his mom heard, we're assuming, because these men put themselves under an oath, this big secret, but then they went and told the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin no doubt talked with their wives and their wives said *'What was the big meeting about? Ah nothing. No, come on, what was it about? Do you really want to know? Ya, forty guys, they're not gonna eat or drink until they kill Paul,'* and then the wives no doubt were talking about it, and somehow it got to Paul's sister or Paul's sister's son. You know, a secret is something you tell one person at a time in the church. Ah, you promise not to tell everybody, so you tell one person at a time. And it had spread, and somehow this nephew now finds out, he comes to the Antonio Fortress, and he says **'Uncle Paul,'** is he this big? Is he this big? The word can include from a boy up to a young man. How old was he? We're not told. This would be great if it was 6-year-old, 7-year-old, *'Hey, Uncle Paul, look at all these crazy guys, they're gonna try to kill ya.'* **“So he [Paul] called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain:”** the Tribune **“for he hath a certain thing to tell him.” (verse 17)** Paul doesn't tell the Centurion, **“So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.” (verse 18)** Isn't it interesting, look what he does, **“Then the chief captain”** the Tribune **“took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?” (verse 19)** he's probably a young boy. Now this would be something you'd do with a younger boy, you'd take him aside, get him away from everything, and say *'What is it that you have to tell me?'* The Tribune shows discretion here. **“And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men,**

which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.” (verses 20-21) Here’s this boy telling the Tribune what to do. **“So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, see thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.” (verse 22)** *‘Make sure you don’t tell anybody about this.’* Now, the Tribune, **“And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;” (verse 23)** again, the Tribune oversees a thousand men, centurions oversee a hundred men. He calls unto himself, notice, verse 23, two Centurions, that would be 200 men, it says **“make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten,”** 70 cavalry, **“and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night,”** so this is 470 men guarding Paul. God takes care of his kids, doesn’t he. He’s using this corrupt government to move the Kingdom forward, he’s got 40 guys who think they’re going to hurt him, then these guys are going to be hungry dudes, because they ain’t going to eat till they kill him, this fast lasts for over two years, we know that for sure [literally, if they complied with their oath, they’d be dead from dehydration within three days]. So the Lord says **‘O yea?’** he gets a little boy involved, he uses natural means, and opens a different door, and he puts around Paul 200 Roman soldiers, 200 Roman spearmen and 70 cavalrymen to now get him out of town, it says, to Caesarea. Now look, Caesarea is about 65 miles or so, kind of northwest on the coast. Caesarea is the capital of the Roman Procurator, that’s where his seat is, of authority, not in Jerusalem. Pontius Pilate and the Procurators would come to Jerusalem during the Feasts, because the populations would swell, and they had to keep order in Jerusalem or face Caesar. So they often would be in Jerusalem for the Feasts, so we hear of Pontius Pilate, we hear of him being in Jerusalem, but their seat of power was in Caesarea by the Sea, many of you have been there, it’s beautiful. So he is, pulls together these 470 men now, to move Paul to Caesarea.

*Paul Sent To Felix The Roman Procurator With A Letter
From Claudius Lysias*

And he says in **verse 24**, “**And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.**” Now Felix, we’re going to meet him, interesting character, it’s not again, get the cat out of your mind, please. [that dates us, Pastor Joe, most folks now wouldn’t know the cartoon about Felix the Cat ‘*That Wonderful, Wonderful Cat*’] Felix and his brother Paulus were slaves. Their mother Antonia was the slave of Claudius’ mother. Claudius is now Caesar. When he was a little boy his mom had a female slave named Antonia, she had two little boys, Felix and Paulus. So Felix, Paulus and Claudius grew up together, and were fast friends. As Claudius becomes Caesar and the Emperor of Rome, Paulus is appointed a very specific position in Rome, in the government there, and Felix is given the Procuratorship over Syria and Judea. He’s a powerful man. Tacitus, a Roman historian tells us he ruled with royal power, but with the mind of a slave. He was cruel, he was intolerant. In fact, in Roman history, he is the first man to have a Procuratorship that was a freed man. He was the first slave ever to be a Procurator in Roman history, so he’s a strange character, but he is governor at this point in time. So Paul will now be taken to Caesarea where Felix is there on the throne. **Verse 25** is very interesting it says “**And he wrote a letter after this manner:**” the Greek phrase “after this manner” *typhos*, the idea is “**this is the exact text**” so Paul is going to be in Caesarea for two years, this letter was on the archives there, Paul was allowed to see it, remember he’s friends with Cornelius in Caesarea, he has great favour from this particular Tribune, somehow Luke actually saw the exact text, so here is, for you and I, the actual text of the letter, written in **verse 26** it begins, “**Claudius Lysias**” now this is the chief captain, the Tribune we’ve been hearing about all along, and his name is Lysias, he’s called Claudius Lysias because he purchased his freedom under Caesar, and Caesar acknowledged that, he was Claudius, so he takes that first name, he is Claudius Lysias, “**unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting..**” “**Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting.**” that’s the way the letter opened. “**This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.**” (**verse 27**) that’s not exactly true, Claudius Lysias. First of all he thought he was an Egyptian, when you go back to chapter 22, he said ‘**Aren’t you that Egyptian?**’ ‘**I’m not Egyptian, I’m from Cilicia, a Jew.**’ Then he says ‘*Take him into Antonio and scourge him,*’ that’s when he finds

out he was a Roman citizen. So he doesn't say '*Ya, I tied him up, bound him, I was going to scourge him, then I found out he was a Roman,*' because then he'd be in trouble. [in reality, this letter also displays the perfect brevity of a military report, including only the most pertinent information. The Book of Joshua reflects a perfect military report of the conquest of Canaan.] So he says **'This man was taken of the Jews, he was being mistreated, and I rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.'** "And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell." (verses 28-30) Paul moving by night, he does that a number of times in the Book of Acts. "Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him by night to Antipatris.*" (verse 31) now this was Paul's last view of Jerusalem. When we go on the trip to Jerusalem, the last night when we were there, we drive around the city, look at the walls, this was Paul's last view of Jerusalem this night, as they took him from the Antonio Fortress, probably out the north gate and on his way to Antipatris, which was 35 miles northwest, a Roman fortress, Paul looking over his shoulders, it would be the last time he would see Jerusalem, in this world. And "on the morrow" 27 more miles they have to make now to reach Caesarea, so this must have been a forced march at night, moving quickly, and "on the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:" (verse 32) so they're more than halfway to Caesarea, at that point they just send him on with the cavalry, the 200 spearmen and the 200 soldiers return now to Jerusalem, "who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. And when the governor had read *the letter,* he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was of Cilicia;*" which is under the jurisdiction of Felix, he said "I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall." (verses 33-35) that's Herod's palace there. Not that Paul lived in opulence, he was not living at leisure in the palace, but no doubt there were rooms in there where political prisoners were kept. We don't know if he was chained to a guard at this point in time or not. But

certainly he had leisure there, and he will be there for two years, so this will end up to be a very important time in his life, while he's there at Caesarea...[transcript of a connective expository sermon on Acts 23:1-35, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116]

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