

Acts 23: PAUL BEFORE THE COUNCIL AND FELIX THE GOVERNOR

Introduction

In Acts 22, we see how Paul defends himself before the crowd, seizing the opportunity to recount his conversion. We also saw how Paul played his Roman citizen card to avoid being mistreated by the Commander, which led the Commander to bring him to stand before the Sanhedrin.

Chapter 23 details Paul's appearance before the Sanhedrin. Paul, knowing the doctrinal differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, pitched them against each other (the Sadducees denied the immortality of the soul, bodily resurrection after death, etc). He took advantage of this difference when he said, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead." The result was a great uproar between them, which exposed the real motive behind Paul's accusation to the commander and led to the dissolution of the meeting.

After this incident, it was discovered that a mob was planning to kill Paul before he could come to trial; the Roman commander hustled Paul away in the night, accompanied by two hundred soldiers, to Caesarea so that his case could be heard by Governor Felix. Governor Felix was the officer of the Roman empire in charge of Judea Province during the time of Paul.

Study the Scriptures: Read the Passage Acts 23:1-35

Note your thoughts as you read:

Write down any questions that come to mind as you read:

Think Through the Following Questions

1. How does Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin highlight the importance of understanding and addressing the context of our audience when sharing the gospel?
2. What does Acts 23:2-5 tell us about the character of Paul? How can we learn from Paul's respect towards the high priest despite the hostility he received?
3. How did Paul demonstrate wisdom and discernment in his defense before the Sanhedrin?
4. How would you characterize Paul's exploitation of the doctrinal conflict between the Pharisees and Sadducees for his defense?
5. How does the thwarted assassination plot demonstrate the sovereignty of God in the lives of His servants?
6. How does the assassination plot provide insight into the extremity of opposition that the early Christians faced?
7. How does this chapter challenge us to trust in God's plan, even when it seems uncertain or dangerous?
8. What does Paul's experience in this chapter teach us about confronting opposition and hardship with wisdom, courage, and faith in the present-day context?

Lessons Learned: Are there any new things you learned from this passage today?

Application: How do you think this will impact your thinking and/or actions going forward?