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By Dan Maines

## Acts 23

### Acts 23:1-2

Now looking intently at the Council, Paul said, "Brothers, I have lived my life with an entirely good conscience before God up to this day." But the high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth.

† Paul declared his clear conscience, showing that in Christ he was blameless. Ananias' order reflected corruption and hostility toward the gospel.

† Josephus (Antiquities 20.9.2) describes Ananias as greedy

and violent, confirming Luke's depiction.

### **Acts 23:3**

Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to judge me according to the Law, and yet in violation of the Law you order me to be struck?"

† Paul's rebuke echoed Jesus' words about whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23:27). Ananias represented hypocrisy, claiming to uphold the Law while violating it.

### **Acts 23:4-5**

But those present said, "Are you insulting God's high priest?" And Paul said, "I was not aware, brothers, that he is high priest; for it is written: 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"

† Paul quoted Exodus 22:28, showing his respect for God's law even while confronting injustice. His humility tempered his sharp rebuke.

### **Acts 23:6**

But Paul, perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, began crying out in the Council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"

† Paul wisely shifted the focus to the resurrection, a dividing line between Sadducees and Pharisees. His defense became a testimony to the core of the gospel.

† Josephus (Antiquities 18.1.4) records the Sadducees' denial of resurrection, while Pharisees affirmed it.

### **Acts 23:7-9**

When he said this, a dissension occurred between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel,

nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. And a great uproar occurred; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and started arguing strenuously, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

† Paul's defense turned his accusers against one another. Some Pharisees even defended him.

### **Acts 23:10-11**

And when a great dissension occurred, the commander was afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, and ordered the soldiers to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks. But on the following night, the Lord stood near him and said, "Be courageous! For as you have testified to the truth about Me in Jerusalem, so you must testify in Rome also."

† Christ Himself comforted Paul, assuring him that his mission was not ending in Jerusalem but continuing to Rome.

### **Acts 23:12-15**

When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and put themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. There were more than forty who formed this plot. They came to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have put ourselves under a curse to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. Now therefore, you, with the Council, notify the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to investigate his case more thoroughly; and we, for our part, are ready to kill him before he comes near."

† The plot revealed the depth of hatred against Paul. Even religious leaders were willing to align with murder.

† The Mishnah (Nedarim 3.1) records the seriousness of oaths,

making their vow even more striking in its corruption.

### **Acts 23:16-22**

But the son of Paul's sister heard about their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul. Paul called one of the centurions to himself and said, "Lead this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him." So he took him and led him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to lead this young man to you since he has something to tell you." The commander took him by the hand and stepping aside, began to inquire of him privately, "What is it that you have to report to me?" And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him. So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are in hiding to ambush him, and these men have put themselves under an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him; and now they are ready and waiting for assurance from you." So the commander let the young man go, instructing him, "Tell no one that you have notified me of these things."

† God providentially used Paul's nephew to expose the plot. Even in danger, God preserved His servant for the mission.

### **Acts 23:23-24**

And he called to himself two of the centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen." They were also to provide mounts for Paul and put him on them, and bring him safely to Felix the governor.

† The massive escort showed Rome's recognition of the seriousness of the threat. Paul was protected by the very empire he was accused of opposing.

## **Acts 23:25-30**

And he wrote a letter with the following content:

"Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings. When this man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, after learning that he was a Roman. And wanting to ascertain the basis for the charges they were bringing against him, I brought him down to their Council; and I found that he was being accused regarding questions in their Law, but he was not charged with anything deserving death or imprisonment. When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you."

† Lysias' letter confirmed Paul's innocence of any crime against Rome. His case was religious, not political.

## **Acts 23:31-35**

So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. But on the next day they let the horsemen go on with him, and they returned to the barracks. When these horsemen had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. Now Felix, after reading the letter, asked what province he was from; and when he learned that he was from Cilicia, he said, "I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive as well," giving orders for Paul to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

† Paul was now under Roman protection in Caesarea, awaiting trial before Felix. God's plan was moving him closer to Rome.

## **How it applies to us today**

† God's servants may face corruption and false accusations, but His providence preserves His mission.

† Christ's resurrection is the dividing truth that exposes both faith and unbelief.

† Believers must remain courageous, knowing that Christ stands with them in trials.

† God can use earthly powers, even corrupt ones, to protect His people and advance His kingdom.

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

### **Source Index**

† Josephus, Antiquities 20.9.2 – High priest Ananias' corruption

† Josephus, Antiquities 18.1.4 – Sadducees' denial of resurrection

† Mishnah, Nedarim 3.1 – Seriousness of vows and oaths

† Roman historical records – Claudius Lysias and Roman procedure

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