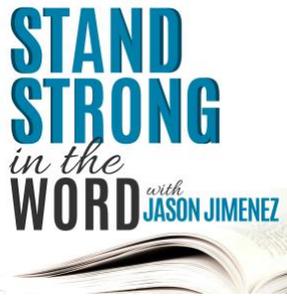


## **“PAUL GIVES A STRONG DEFENSE AND IS RESCUED”** **Acts 22:30-23:35**

Paul is brought before the Sanhedrin to give a defense for his actions. In his presentation, Paul argues that Christianity is rooted in Judaism, Jesus Christ is the Messiah, and through his death and resurrection—he offers new life for Jews and Gentiles.

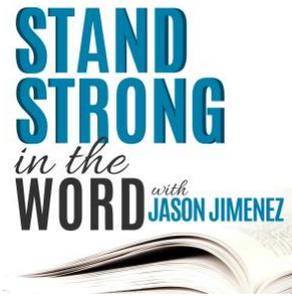
### **I. Paul Stands Before the Sanhedrin (22:30-23:11)**

1. **22:30** *But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief priests and all the council (Sanhedrin) to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them.* Lysias, in following the law, allowed Paul (a Roman citizen) to hear the charges brought against him by the Sanhedrin. However, as commander, Lysias had to walk a fine line with the Jewish council. He could order the Jews to give an explanation of the rioting but not interfere with their own deliberations.
2. **And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.”** Paul employs a common defense in his opening by maintaining his innocence before God. The phrase ***I have lived my life before God***, literally means “lived as a citizen before God,” which, according to the OT, can mean “walking blamelessly before God” (1 Cor. 4:4; Phil. 3:6; 2 Tim. 1:3). Paul was not implying he was without sin, but, as a new man in Christ, he now lived in Christ’s grace and fulfilled truth.
3. **<sup>2</sup>And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.** Paul is slapped for making such a bold statement. **Ananias**—A violent high priest (not the one mentioned in 5:1 and 9:10) who aligned himself with the Romans (AD 47-58).
  - A. *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, “What triggers the high priest’s physical response? Is it (1) Paul’s manner of speaking (his simple form of address [Lake and Cadbury 1979:287] or impolite speaking out of turn [Haenchen 1971:637]), (2) the content of Paul’s confession (the arrogant, even blasphemous, assertion that he can be a good Jew though now he is a Christian [Stott 1990:351]) or (3) the high priest’s frustration with Paul’s holy boldness as he bears witness to the truth, leaving the Jewish cleric at a loss for words? Ordering Paul to be slapped is very much in character for high priest Ananias, son of Nedebaeus (or Nebedaeus), who served A.D. 47-59.



He was both greedy and ruthlessly violent, using beatings to extort tithes from common priests' allotment and leaving them destitute (Josephus Jewish Antiquities 20.205-7).”

4. <sup>3</sup> ***Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?”*** In a way, Paul’s words to Ananias were prophetic because he would eventually be killed by Jewish freedom fighters (Zealots) in AD 66. ***Contrary to the law***—Paul calls out the abuse of the Jewish law by presuming he is guilty before having a chance to defend his innocence. Paul may have been referring to Leviticus 19:15, which reads, “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.”
  - A. <sup>4</sup> ***Those who stood by said, “Would you revile God’s high priest?”***  
<sup>5</sup> ***And Paul said, “I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’ ”*** It’s likely Paul didn’t know who the high priest was because of his poor eyesight (Gal. 4:15; 6:11), the fact that he had been away from Jerusalem for so long, and/or that Ananias wasn’t wearing his official attire and seated in a place of prominence.
5. <sup>6</sup> ***Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.”*** After being struck before the Sanhedrin, Paul realized he needed to adjust his strategy if he were to survive the hearing. Therefore, Paul decides to cause a division within the Sanhedrin by citing his Pharisaism and belief in the resurrection.
6. <sup>7</sup> ***And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.*** <sup>8</sup> ***For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.*** The Sadducees only held to the Torah; which, in their mind, does not clearly teach about bodily resurrection (see Lk. 20:27-40).
7. <sup>9</sup> ***Then a great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees’ party stood up and contended sharply, “We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?”*** Despite the fact that Paul had betrayed the Sanhedrin by converting to Christianity, the Pharisees, momentarily, defend him because of their shared supernatural beliefs.
8. <sup>10</sup> ***And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the***

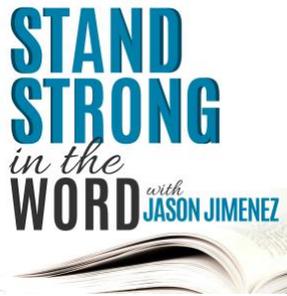


**barracks.** The debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees soon got out of hand. More than likely, Paul would have been murdered if the Roman soldiers didn't intervene.

9. ***11 The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome."*** The Lord appears to Paul to assure him that his life will not end in Jerusalem, but that great things still await him in Rome. Paul's chains in Rome will afford him to write more inspired letters and coordinate with many fellow believers in spreading the gospel, expanding churches, and defending the faith.

## II. A PLOT IS MADE TO HAVE PAUL MURDERED (23:12-22)

1. ***12 When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath*** (call down a divine curse/judgment if the vow is broken) ***neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.*** ***13 There were more than forty who made this conspiracy.*** ***14 They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul.*** ***15 Now therefore you, along with the council, give notice to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case more exactly. And we are ready to kill him before he comes near."*** The forty men taking the oath (vow) to have Paul killed were Zealots or "terrorists" who will later revolt against Rome in the mid-60s. They exposed their plot, not to the Pharisees (scribes), but to the chief priests and elders (Sadducees). Luke reveals the hatred the Jews had for Paul.
2. ***16 Now the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul.*** This is the only direct mentioning of a relative of Paul's in Acts and in his letters. For other possible passages in the Bible: Rom. 16:7, 11, 21.
3. ***17 Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the tribune (chiliarch), for he has something to tell him."*** ***18 So he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, "Paul the prisoner called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, as he has something to say to you."*** ***19 The tribune took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?"*** ***20 And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more closely about him.*** ***21 But do not be persuaded by them, for more than forty of their men are lying in ambush for him, who have bound themselves by an oath neither***

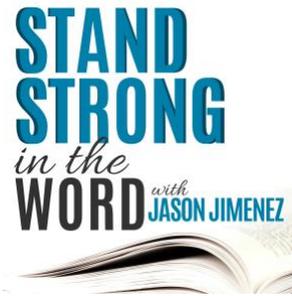


*to eat nor drink till they have killed him. And now they are ready, waiting for your consent.*" The fact the tribune believed Paul's nephew reveals the Romans knew just how evil and treacherous Ananias was and how dangerous this could be for them if they failed to act. This will be the second time the Romans save Paul's life (21:32-36; 23:10; 22:22-24). **Paul the prisoner**—From now on, Paul will be referred to as a "prisoner for Christ" (23:18; 25:14, 27; Eph. 3:1; 4:1; Philem. 1, 9).

4. <sup>22</sup> *So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, "Tell no one that you have informed me of these things."* The tribune dispatched their own secret plans to protect Paul and his nephew from harm.

### III. PAUL IS RUSHED OUT OF JERUSALEM FOR HIS PROTECTION (23:23-35)

1. <sup>23</sup> *Then he called two of the centurions and said, "Get ready two hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night. <sup>24</sup> Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix the governor (Roman procurator)."* <sup>25</sup> *And he wrote a letter to this effect:* Lysias, the commander, takes action and calls up the infantry to protect Paul (a Roman citizen) from being murdered by the Zealots.
2. <sup>26</sup> *"Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings. <sup>27</sup> This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. <sup>28</sup> And desiring to know the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council. <sup>29</sup> I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. <sup>30</sup> And when it was disclosed to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him."* Luke received the contents of the letter Lysias wrote Felix from Paul. In essence, Lysias defends Paul's innocence and makes a strong case for his removal from Jerusalem to Caesarea. **Having learned that he was a Roman citizen**—Lysias conveniently leaves out the fact that it was Paul who told him he was a Roman before being flogged (22:24-29).
3. <sup>31</sup> *So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. <sup>32</sup> And on the next day they returned to the barracks, letting the horsemen go on with him.* The soldiers get a head start to avoid being ambushed by the Zealots in case their plans to remove Paul from Jerusalem were leaked. **Antipatris**—Named after Herod the



Great's father, Antipater, the city was a military outpost (relay station) thirty to forty miles northwest of Jerusalem.

4. <sup>33</sup> *When they had come to Caesarea* (capital of Judea). *and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him.* <sup>34</sup> *On reading the letter, he asked what province he was from. And when he learned that he was from Cilicia,* <sup>35</sup> *he said, "I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive."* *And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's* (Herod the Great) *praetorium.* Antonius Felix (governed the region of Judea from AD 52-60) asks to know what providence Paul came from to make sure he fell in his jurisdiction. **Cilicia**—Paul's hometown was under the authority of the Roman legate of Syria—the command center that Felix reported to. **Herod's praetorium**—Paul will remain for two years in Herod's palace by the sea. It is here Paul will write many of his letters.

- A. *NKJV Study Bible*, "Felix had been a slave, but had gained the status of freedman under the Emperor Claudius. Because Felix's brother was a friend of the emperor, Felix's political career blossomed, even though he was not popular among his peers. Felix was known for indulging in every kind of lust, and the writer Tacitus described him as "exercising the powers of a king with the character of a slave."