

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2026 // THE BOOK OF ACTS

PAUL AND THE SANHEDRIN (ACTS 22:30–23:11) ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

Paul was released to the Sanhedrin (a group he was once a member of) with an opportunity to share the gospel to those he affectionately called, "Brothers."

- Paul was given a new life through Jesus, but that doesn't mean he didn't love those from his past life. **He loved them enough to share truth with them.**

ANANIAS, THE HIGH PRIEST

Ananias was appointed as high priest in 48 A.D. and only retained that position for 10 years. His tenure was marked by bribery and theft of temple offerings.

- Paul told Ananias that **God would strike him**, and this prophetic statement was fulfilled in 66 A.D. when Ananias was assassinated by a Jewish nationalist.

SPEAKING AGAINST THE HIGH PRIEST

Paul's claim of having **"lived [his] life before God in all good conscience"** pushed Ananias to order the men with him to strike Paul on the mouth.

- Paul reacted to this order by saying that God would strike Ananias and by calling him a whitewashed wall and a hypocrite. The men with Ananias replied, **"Do you dare revile God's high priest?"**

THE PERFECT GOD USES IMPERFECT PEOPLE

Though Paul was right about God's judgment of Ananias, and Ananias was in fact a whitewashed wall and a hypocrite, Paul acknowledged it was a violation of the law to **"speak evil of a ruler of your people."**

- This shows that Paul may have lost his cool and said something he should not have said.

"I DID NOT KNOW..."

Paul defended himself by claiming he did not know that Ananias was the High Priest.

- Paul had been out of Jewish authority for more than 20 years and may not have known Ananias. Some think Paul's eyesight kept him from recognizing Ananias (Galatians. 4:14–15; 6:11), and others think Paul was sarcastically saying, "I didn't think a high priest would act this way!"

PAUL'S HEART FOR HIS FELLOW ISRAELITES

Paul was saddened by the rejection of the gospel by his fellow Israelites, and his sorrow was exacerbated by two failed attempts.

- "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the benefit of my brothers and sisters, my own flesh and blood" (Romans 9:2–3).

DIVIDING THE OPPOSITION

Seeing that they were not going to be receptive to the message, Paul moved from **trying to preach the gospel to trying to preserve his liberty before those who wanted to kill him.**

- Paul wanted to divide the room, instead of having them unite against him, so he used a topic of controversy among the Pharisees and Sadducees: **the resurrection of the dead.**

"THE LORD STOOD BY HIM"

It was in the darkness of the night and Paul's despair that the Lord stood by him. Paul had been delivered from prison before, but this time **the Lord met him in prison.**

- At times Jesus will **deliver us from our circumstances**, while other times **He wants us to recognize His presence in our circumstances** (Matthew 28:20).

PAUL WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RESULTS

Jesus told Paul to **"Have courage!"** Though Paul didn't know what awaited him, Jesus did.

- Jesus comforted Paul by telling him **the results of his preaching were not his responsibility.** Paul was only responsible for testifying about Jesus in Jerusalem, and **God still had more for him to do in Rome.**

HATRED (ACTS 23:12–22)

"BOUND THEMSELVES UNDER A CURSE"

This group of 40 zealous assassins was so convinced Paul needed to die that they all took an oath that they would not eat or drink until Paul was dead.

- These Jewish Zealots had zeal, but it was without knowledge because they wanted to kill Paul who was appointed by the one true God (Rom.10:2).

"THE JEWS FORMED A CONSPIRACY"

The Zealots' hatred for Paul propelled them to a place where **they were willing to partner with a group they despised.** The chief priest and elders **threw the law and justice out the window** because of their hatred for Paul.

- Hatred toward others **poisons our hearts and minds.** If unaddressed, it causes confusion and blindness so **we will act out of character.**

"HEARING ABOUT THEIR AMBUSH"

The plot was to have the Sanhedrin request for the commander to bring Paul to them to investigate, and they would attack and kill Paul in route.

- Paul's nephew learned of the trap and reported it to Paul. He was then instructed to inform the commander of the conspiracy to kill Paul while he was in his care.

ARRIVING SAFELY (ACTS 23:23–35)

NOTHING WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TO PAUL

God promised Paul that he would not be killed in Jerusalem because there was still work for him to do in Rome. God would use 470 trained Roman soldiers to escort Paul out of Jerusalem.

- Though this seems extreme for 40 assassins, it shows how **God will go to extremes to reveal the truth of Jesus.**

PAUL WAS TRANSPORTED SAFELY TO FELIX

Lysias wrote a letter to Felix, the Roman governor of Judea, detailing almost all that had transpired (he left out that Paul was bound, beaten, and almost scourged).

- Felix read the letter and asked Paul where he was from, most likely to establish jurisdiction. Upon learning that Paul was from Cilicia, Felix agreed to hold a hearing.

AN AUDIENCE WITH THE GOVERNOR OF JUDEA

Felix agreeing to hear Paul was the first time he was given the opportunity to speak to someone at this level of authority.

- This was the beginning of the fulfilment of the promise God made to Paul around 20 years earlier: that Paul was **His chosen instrument to take the name of Jesus to Israelites, Gentiles, and kings** (Acts 9:15).

"KEPT UNDER GUARD IN HEROD'S PALACE"

Paul's years of spontaneous travel were coming to an end.

- Paul would be taken to Caesarea, where he would be confined in Herod's praetorium for two years before being held in Rome for two additional years. Including travel time, **Paul was about to spend the next five years in Roman custody** before being executed.

LOVING GOD AND LOVING OTHERS

- Jesus told us that the greatest commandments are to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself.
- To love someone does not mean we have to agree on everything.
- Do we love our neighbor enough to share the truth with them?

HATRED

- We are instructed to hate evil and to love what is good (Psalm 97:10; Amos 5:15).
- Hatred of evil is commanded, whereas hatred of others is condemned.
- Jesus equated hatred being harbored towards another to murder (1 John 3:15).
- We can't claim to walk in the light while hating our neighbor (1 John 2:11).

STANDING ON THE PROMISES OF GOD

- Do the promises of God make a difference in how we think and feel?
- Do we believe that Jesus stands with us in our circumstances?
- Our faith, hope, and actions must be rooted in the truth of what God has spoken. We must refuse to let circumstances shake our confidence in who He is.