

# Acts 23 Commentary

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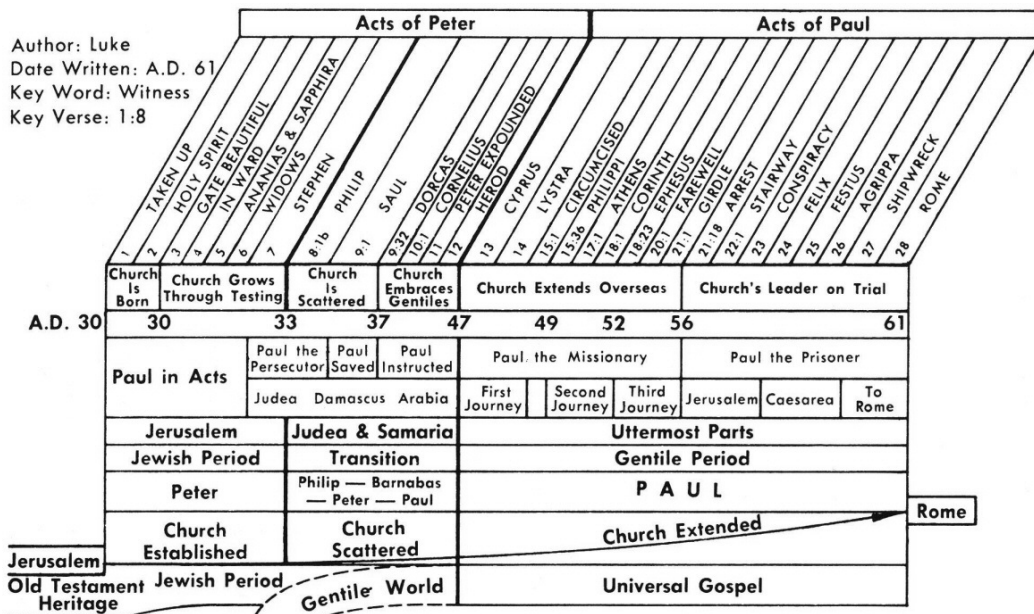
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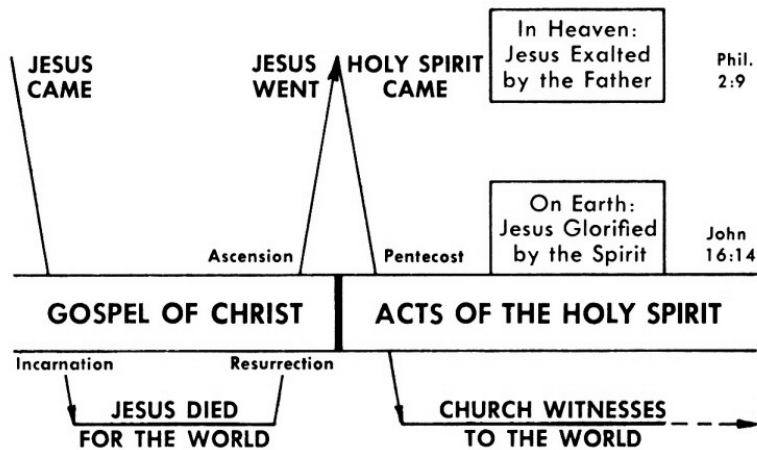
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Author: Luke  
 Date Written: A.D. 61  
 Key Word: Witness  
 Key Verse: 1:8



Click chart to enlarge  
 Chart from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

**THE EXPANDING WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH**



Click chart to enlarge

**John Hannah's Outline for Third Missionary Journey** (see [map](#))

- D. The third missionary journey of Paul (Acts 18:23-21:16)
  - 1. The ministry in Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23)
  - 2. The ministry in Ephesus (Acts 18:24-19:41)
    - a. Instruction of Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)
    - b. Instruction of some of John's followers (Acts 19:1-7)
    - c. Instruction of the Ephesians (Acts 19:8-20)
    - d. Instructions concerning his plans (Acts 19:21-22)
    - e. The riots in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41)
  - 3. The ministry in Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 20:1-5)
  - 4. The ministry in Troas (Acts 20:6-12)
  - 5. The ministry in Miletus (Acts 20:13-38)
    - a. His journey to Miletus (Acts 20:13-16)
    - b. His message to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-35)
      - 1. Concerning his ministry (Acts 20:17-27)
      - 2. Concerning the church (Acts 20:28-35)
    - c. His farewell to the Ephesians (Acts 20:36-38)
  - 6. The ministry at Tyre (Acts 21:1-6)
    - a. His journey to Tyre (Acts 21:1-3)
    - b. His ministry in Tyre (Acts 21:4-6)

7. The ministry in Caesarea (Acts 21:7-16)
    - a. Agabus' prediction (Acts 21:7-12)
    - b. Paul's reply (Acts 21:13-14)
    - c. The journey toward Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-16)
  - E. The journey of Paul to Rome (Acts 21:17-28:31)
    1. His witness in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17-23:35)
      - a. Paul's report to the elders (Acts 21:17-26)
      - b. Paul's arrest (Acts 21:27-36)
      - c. Paul's defense (Acts 21:37-23:10)
        1. His first defense (Acts 21:37-22:23)
          - a. The background (Acts 21:37-40)
          - b. The content (Acts 22:1-21)
          - c. The result (Acts 22:22-23)
        2. His second defense (Acts 22:24-23:10)
          - a. The background (Acts 22:24-29)
          - b. The council (Acts 22:30)
          - c. The content (Acts 23:1-9)
          - d. The conflict (Acts 23:10)
      - d. Paul's deliverance (Acts 23:11-35)
        1. The encouragement (Acts 23:11)
        2. The plot (Acts 23:12-16)
        3. The counterplot (Acts 23:17-24)
        4. The letter to Felix (Acts 23:25-30)
        5. The deliverance to Felix (Acts 23:31-35)
    2. His witness in Caesarea (Acts 24:1-26:32)
      - a. Paul's defense before Felix (Acts 24:1-27)
        1. The setting (Acts 24:1)
        2. The accusations of Tertullus (Acts 24:2-9)
        3. The reply of Paul (Acts 24:10-21)
        4. The consequences (Acts 24:22-27)
      - b. Paul's defense before Festus (Acts 25:1-12)
        1. The setting (Acts 25:1-5)
        2. The trial (Acts 25:6-11)
        3. The result (Acts 25:12)
      - c. Paul's defense before Agrippa (Acts 25:13-26:32)
        1. The arrival of Agrippa (Acts 25:13)
        2. Festus' presentation of Paul's case (Acts 25:14-22)
        3. Festus' presentation of Paul (Acts 25:23-27)
        4. Paul's defense before Agrippa (Acts 26:1-23)
        5. Paul's answer to Festus (Acts 26:24-26)
        6. Paul's interaction with Agrippa (Acts 26:27-29)
        7. The conclusion (Acts 26:30-32)
    3. His witness on the way to Rome (Acts 27:1-28:15)
      - a. His witness aboard ship (Acts 27:1-44)
      - b. His witness on Malta (Acts 28:1-15)
        1. Paul's miraculous preservation (Acts 28:1-6)
        2. Paul's healing of Publius' father (Acts 28:7-10)
        3. Paul's continued journey toward Rome (Acts 28:11-15)
    4. His witness in Rome (Acts 28:16-31)
      - a. The occasion for his witness (Acts 28:16-22)
      - b. The content of his witness (Acts 28:23-28)
      - c. The result of his witness (Acts 28:29)
      - d. The summary of Paul's witness in Rome (Acts 28:30-31)
- [Hannah's Bible Outlines](#) - Recommended Resource

KJV Acts 23:1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

NET Acts 23:1 Paul looked directly at the council and said, "Brothers, I have lived my life with a clear conscience before God to this day."

GNT Acts 23:1 τεν σας δ Παλος τ συνεδρ επεν, νδρες δελφο, γ π σ συνειδ σει γαθ πεπολ τευμαι τ θε χρι τα της τ ς μ ρας.

NLT Acts 23:1 Gazing intently at the high council, Paul began: "Brothers, I have always lived before God with a clear conscience!"

ESV Acts 23:1 And looking intently at the council, Paul said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day."

CSB Acts 23:1 Paul looked intently at the Sanhedrin and said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience until this day."

NIV Acts 23:1 Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day."

NAB Acts 23:1 Paul looked intently at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have conducted myself with a perfectly clear conscience before God to this day."

NKJ Acts 23:1 Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

NJB Acts 23:1 Paul looked steadily at the Sanhedrin and began to speak, 'My brothers, to this day I have conducted myself before God with a perfectly clear conscience.'

GWN Acts 23:1 Paul stared at the Jewish council and said, "Brothers, my relationship with God has always given me a perfectly clear conscience."

NRS Acts 23:1 While Paul was looking intently at the council he said, "Brothers, up to this day I have lived my life with a clear conscience before God."

YLT Acts 23:1 And Paul having earnestly beheld the sanhedrim, said, 'Men, brethren, I in all good conscience have lived to God unto this day;'

- **Paul, looking intently at the Council** Acts 23:6; 6:15; 22:5; Pr 28:1
- **Brethren** Acts 22:1
- **I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience** Acts 24:16; 1 Cor 4:4; 2 Cor 1:12; 4:2; 2 Ti 1:3; Heb 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16
- [Video of Paul before the Sanhedrin](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

**Paul, looking intently at the Council, said** - NET note on Greek "Paul, looking directly at the council, said." Luke uses a vivid verb for **atenizo** means to be completed fixed (fixated), even in the sense of staring at someone. Paul's eyes on not on the floor out of fear, but fearlessly fixated on the eyeballs of his adversaries. He is looking at them straight in their eyes! Recall that the **Council** ([Sanhedrin](#)) was the highest legal, legislative, and judicial body among the Jews.

This is an amazing turn of events for many years before Paul had stood before this august Jewish body and received their authorization to persecute the followers of Christ. And now Paul one of the "persecuted" was appearing to be judged by them.

**Guzik** points out that "The previous day Paul saw a great opportunity go unfulfilled when the crowd at the temple mount did not allow him to finish his message to them, but started rioting again. Now Paul had another opportunity to win Israel to Jesus, and perhaps a *better* opportunity. Here he spoke to **the council**, with the opportunity to preach Jesus to these influential men." ([Commentary](#))

**Looking intently** (816) ([atenizo](#) from from **atenes** = strained, intent which in turn is from **a** = intensifies + **teino** = to stretch, to

extend or to strain all of which help to paint a picture of the meaning of **atenizo**) means to look intently, to fix one's gaze on, to stare at, to gaze earnestly, to look straight at, to fasten one's eyes upon. The first use describes Jesus' first "sermon" in the synagogues, Luke recording "And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue **were fixed** on Him." (Luke 4:20). It describes the servant girl looking at Peter (Lk 22:56), the disciples looking as Jesus ascended (a great picture of the sense of this verb) (Acts 1:10), of Peter fixing his gaze on the lame man (Acts 3:4), of the Sanhedrin fixing their gaze on Stephen (Acts 6:15), of Stephen gazing intently at heaven and seeing Jesus (Acts 7:55, cf also Acts 10:4; Acts 11:6; Acts 13:9; Acts 14:9).

**Robertson** has an interesting thought - Paul may have had weak eyes, but probably the earnest gaze was to see if he recognized any faces that were in the body that tried Stephen and to which he apparently once belonged.

**Brethren** - Some commentators believe this was an unusual way to address the esteemed members of the Sanhedrin, as indicated by the reaction of the high priest in verse 2.

**William Barclay** observes that "There was a certain audacious recklessness about Paul's conduct before the Sanhedrin; he acted like a man who knew that he was burning his boats. Even his very beginning was a challenge. To say **Brethren** was to put himself on an equal footing with the court; for the normal beginning when addressing the Sanhedrin was, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel."

**I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day** - "I have lived my life with a clear conscience before God." I have lived is in the perfect tense speaking of his abiding attitude and practice. He lived Coram Deo and while not perfect was confident of his good conscience. What Paul is saying in essence is "I am not guilty & you are wrong in judging me. Your charges are baseless."

Writing to the saints at Corinth Paul said

For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. (1 Cor 4:4)

**Peter** gives a good "commentary" on Paul's clear conscience and why we too should make it our aim to maintain a good conscience before God...

But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and **keep a good conscience** (WHY) so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. (1 Peter 3:14-16+)

**Lived my life** (4176)(**politeuomai** from **polites** = a citizen from **polis** = a city) literally meant to live as a citizen. The idea of citizenship was Greek and Roman, not Jewish. Luke uses the term in a sense figuratively of how Paul lived as belonging to God's kingdom. As **Rackham** says "He had lived as God's citizen, as a member of God's commonwealth" The only other NT uses is Php 1:27 where Paul exhorts the saints at Philippi "Only **conduct** ([present imperative](#)) yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

**Jack Arnold** - The statement almost seems like bragging on the part of Paul, but it is a very accurate statement about Paul's life before and after his conversion to Christ. Throughout his life, he always followed his conscience before God. Even before he became a Christian, he did have a conscience bent towards God. Even the approval of the stoning of Stephen, the imprisonment of Christians and the signing of death warrants for Christians was done in sincerity towards God even though he was sincerely wrong. However, Paul thought he was doing right. "Even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13). This brash statement coupled with the fact that he addressed the Sanhedrin with the common term "brethren," making himself one with them, caused the high priest to think Paul was showing disrespect and an insolent attitude.

**F F Bruce** - "Paul might well appeal to the testimony of conscience as he stood before the supreme court of Israel; it was on no righteousness of his own, however, that he relied for justification in the heavenly court. The purest conscience was an insecure basis of confidence under the scrutiny of God."

**John MacArthur** on **good conscience** - That Paul had **lived his life with a perfectly good conscience before God** does not mean all his actions had always been right. It does mean that Paul felt no guilt for anything he had done, in spite of the Sanhedrin's accusations. It should be noted that the conscience does not determine whether actions are morally right or wrong—Paul's conscience had once permitted him to persecute Christians. Conscience is the faculty that passes moral judgment on a person's

actions (Rom. 2:14-15). But it does so based only on the highest standards of morality and conduct perceived by that individual. It is thus neither the voice of God nor infallible. A conscience uninformed by biblical truth will not necessarily pass accurate judgments (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4). Before his conversion, Paul's had not. It is possible for the conscience to be damaged, dysfunctional, even destroyed. The Bible speaks of a weak conscience (1 Cor. 8:7, 10), a wounded conscience (1 Cor. 8:12), a defiled conscience (Titus 1:15), an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22), and, worst of all, a seared conscience (1 Tim. 4:2)—one so covered with scar tissue from habitual sin that it no longer responds to the proddings of divine truth. Obviously, a conscience in one of those states will not always assess things properly. On the other hand, the Bible commends a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:5, 19; Heb. 13:18; 1 Pet. 3:16, 21), a blameless conscience (Acts 24:16), and a clear conscience (1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3). Such a spiritually healthy conscience results from the forgiveness of sin based on the atoning work of Christ (Heb. 9:14; 10:22). Christians' consciences, informed by the standards of God's Word, are able to assess accurately their actions. Christians thus need to strengthen their consciences by constantly exposing them to the truths of Scripture. Paul had such a fully and rightly informed conscience, and it was not accusing him. (For a biblical study of the **conscience**, see John MacArthur, [The Vanishing Conscience](#) [1994].) (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Robertson** has a lengthy comment on **good conscience** - This claim seems to lack tact, but for brevity's sake Paul sums up a whole speech in it. He may have said much more than Luke here reports along the line of his speech the day before, but Paul did not make this claim without consideration. It appears to contradict his confession as the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:13-16). But that depends on one's interpretation of "good conscience." The word *suneidēsis* is literally "joint-knowledge" in Greek, Latin (*conscientia*) and English "conscience" from the Latin. It is a late word from *sunoida*, to know together, common in O.T., Apocrypha, Philo, Plutarch, New Testament, Stoics, ecclesiastical writers. In itself the word simply means consciousness of one's own thoughts (Hebrews 10:2), or of one's own self, then consciousness of the distinction between right and wrong (Romans 2:15) with approval or disapproval. But the conscience is not an infallible guide and acts according to the light that it has (1 Cor. 8:7, 10; 1 Peter 2:19). The conscience can be contaminated (Hebrews 10:22, *evil ponērās*). All this and more must be borne in mind in trying to understand Paul's description of his motives as a persecutor. Alleviation of his guilt comes thereby, but not removal of guilt as he himself felt (1 Tim. 1:13-16). He means to say to the Sanhedrin that he persecuted Christians as a conscientious (though mistaken) Jew (Pharisee) just as he followed his conscience in turning from Judaism to Christianity. It is a pointed disclaimer against the charge that he is a renegade Jew, an opposer of the law, the people, the temple. Paul addresses the Sanhedrin as an equal and has no "apologies" (in our sense) to make for his career as a whole. The golden thread of consistency runs through, as a good citizen in God's commonwealth. He had the consolation of a good conscience (1 Peter 3:16). The word does not occur in the Gospels and chiefly in Paul's Epistles, but we see it at work in John 8:9 (the interpolation John 7:53-8:11).

**Utley** on **conscience** - Paul uses the term "conscience" often in the Corinthian letters (cf. 1 Cor 4:4; 8:7,10,12; 10:25,27,28,29; II Cor. 1:12; 4:2; 5:11). It refers to that moral inner sense of what is appropriate or inappropriate (cf. Acts 23:1). The conscience can be affected by our past lives, our poor choices, or by the Spirit of God. It is not a flawless guide, but it does determine the boundaries of individual faith. Therefore, to violate our conscience, even if it is in error or weak, is a major faith problem. The believer's conscience needs to be more and more formed by the Word of God and the Spirit of God (cf. I Tim. 3:9). God will judge believers (i.e., weak or strong, cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13) by the light they have, but all of us need to be open to the Bible and the Spirit for more light and to be growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Conscience** (4893) (**suneidēsis** is derived from **sun/syn** = with + **eido** = know) literally means a "knowing with", a co-knowledge with oneself or a being of one's own witness in the sense that one's own conscience "takes the stand" as the chief witness, testifying either to one's innocence or guilt. It describes the witness borne to one's conduct by that faculty by which we apprehend the will of God.

As an aside the Bible reminds us of

1. a good conscience - Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:19; Heb. 8:18
2. a conscience void of offence - Acts 24:16
3. a weak conscience - 1 Cor. 8:7, 10, 12
4. a pure conscience - 1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3
5. a seared conscience - 1 Tim. 4:2
6. a defiled conscience - Titus 1:15
7. an evil conscience - Heb. 10:22

**Warren Wiersbe** - "Conscience" is one of Paul's favorite words; he used it twice in Acts (23:1; 24:16) and twenty-one times in his letters. The word means "to know with, to know together." Conscience is the inner "judge" or "witness" that approves when we do right and disapproves when we do wrong (Rom. 2:15). Conscience does not set the standard; it only applies it. The conscience of a thief would bother him if he told the truth about his fellow crooks just as much as a Christian's conscience would convict him if he told

a lie about his friends. Conscience does not make the standards; it only applies the standards of the person, whether they are good or bad, right or wrong. Conscience may be compared to a window that lets in the light. God's Law is the light; and the cleaner the window is, the more the light shines in. As the window gets dirty, the light gets dimmer; and finally the light becomes darkness. A good conscience, or pure conscience (1 Tim. 3:9), is one that lets in God's light so that we are properly convicted if we do wrong and encouraged if we do right. A defiled conscience (1 Cor. 8:7) is one that has been sinned against so much that it is no longer dependable. If a person continues to sin against his conscience, he may end up with an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22) or a seared conscience (1 Tim. 4:2). Then he would feel convicted if he did what was right rather than what was wrong! Paul had persecuted the church and had even caused innocent people to die, so how could he claim to have a good conscience? He had lived up to the light that he had, and that is all that a good conscience requires. After he became a Christian and the bright light of God's glory shone into his heart (2 Cor. 4:6), Paul then saw things differently and realized that he was "the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). (BEC - Acts)

### Acts 23:2 The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth.

KJV Acts 23:2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

NET Acts 23:2 At that the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth.

GNT Acts 23:2 ὁ ρχιερεις ναν ας π ταξεν το ς παρεστ σινα τ τ ππειν α το τ στ μα.

NLT Acts 23:2 Instantly Ananias the high priest commanded those close to Paul to slap him on the mouth.

ESV Acts 23:2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.

CSB Acts 23:2 But the high priest Ananias ordered those who were standing next to him to strike him on the mouth.

NIV Acts 23:2 At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth.

NAB Acts 23:2 The high priest Ananias ordered his attendants to strike his mouth.

NKJ Acts 23:2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.

NJB Acts 23:2 At this the high priest Ananias ordered his attendants to strike him on the mouth.

GWN Acts 23:2 The chief priest Ananias ordered the men standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth.

NRS Acts 23:2 Then the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near him to strike him on the mouth.

YLT Acts 23:2 and the chief priest Ananias commanded those standing by him to smite him on the mouth,

- **Ananias** Acts 24:1
- **to strike him on the mouth** 1 Kings 22:24; Jer 20:2; Micah 5:1; Mt 26:67; John 18:22
- [Video of Paul before the Sanhedrin](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## AN UNLAWFUL BLOW

**The high priest ([archiereus](#)) Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth**- So much for the idea of innocent until proven guilty! As Knowing says Ananias' "act was illegal and peculiarly offensive to a Jew at the hands of a Jew." The high priest's action reminds us of a similar response to Jesus "When He had said this (Jn 18:20,21), one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" (John 18:22)

**NET Note** - The action was probably designed to indicate a rejection of Paul's claim to a clear conscience in the previous verse.

**William Barclay** explains that "When the high priest ordered Paul to be struck, he himself was transgressing the Law, which said, **"He who strikes the cheek of an Israelite, strikes, as it were, the glory of God"**

**Jack Andrews** on **Ananias** - He reigned as high priest from 47 A.D to 59 A.D. This man had heard enough from Paul in his opening statement. He had tuned him out and turned him off in his introduction! Some people do that to their pastor every Sunday! (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts - Volume 6)

I like what **Joseph Parker** said "But **goodness always awakens wickedness**. The man presiding over the council was the embodiment of every crime that could defile personal character and debase official dignity. Josephus paints his portrait, and the

portrait is one mass of darkness, and no later historian has ventured to add one touch of light to the infinite density. Hearing a man claim a good conscience, he was reminded of his own evil career; and we often seek to make ourselves virtuous by punishing what we believe to be, or apparently conceive to be, the claim of any other man to a good standing and spotless reputation. "Ananias commanded them that stood by Paul to smite him on the mouth." That is the only thing the bad man can do. He has no other shot in his locker; he can only strike, abuse, defame, and cause the innocent to suffer. It is the least power—it is not power; it is the weakness of fury and the fury of weakness." ([People's Commentary - Acts](#)) (Bold added)

**Hunt** - Ananias served as high priest from A.D. 47-58. At the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, it seemed that the appointment was being passed around within the family of Annas, whose son-in-law Chaiphos was the high priest who helped orchestrate the death of Christ. "Ironically, at the beginning of Paul's ministry another Ananias helped him receive his sight" [BKC]. Ananias, the high priest before whom Paul appeared, showed none of the character of our eternal High Priest. We must remember certain things about the office of high priest at this point in history. (1) Ananias is not Aaron, and Moses is not giving him messages from Yahweh. (2) The office of high priest was no longer passed down from father to son in the line of Aaron. (3) The high priest was now appointed by Rome (at times annually, but Ananias had now served for a decade). (4) Rome appointed a members of the sect of the Sadducees to that office at this time. (5) The office of high priest was more political than religious at this time. The 11 high priest was politically religious and religiously political. Sadducees did not believe in the supernatural, angels, or the resurrection of the dead). That means that the high priest who entered God's Most Holy Place once each year on the Day of Atonement for himself and for all the people of Israel did not believe in atonement! He did not believe in eternal life or see a need for salvation. ([Commentary](#))

**David Guzik** - The **Ananias** who was high priest at this time did no honor to the office. He was well known for his greed; the ancient Jewish historian Josephus tells of how Ananias stole for himself the tithes that belonged to the common priests. "He did not scruple to use violence and assassination to further his interests" (Bruce). ([Ibid](#))

The **Pulpit Commentary** described **Ananias** as "a violent, haughty, gluttonous, and rapacious man."

**Robertson on Ananias** - Not the one in Luke 3:2; John 18:13; Acts 4:7, but the son of Nebedaeus, nominated high priest by Herod, King of Chalcis, A.D. 48 and till A.D. 59. He was called to Rome A.D. 52 to answer "a charge of rapine and cruelty made against him by the Samaritans, but honourably acquitted" (Page). Though high priest, he was a man of bad character.

**Jack Arnold** - This is not the Ananias of the Gospels, but he was placed in office in 47 A.D. and remained there for 17 years. He was notorious as one of the most wicked men of his day. He was a scoundrel who had his enemies assassinated at the drop of a hat. Ananias, offended by Paul's common greeting to the Sanhedrin, appalled at Paul's honesty and naturally prejudiced against Paul, commanded that Paul be struck in the mouth for what he thought to be a haughty attitude.

**Gotquestions on Ananias** - A third Ananias in the Bible was high priest in Jerusalem during much of Paul's early ministry. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Ananias was appointed by Herod Agrippa II in approximately AD 48. Known for his harshness and cruelty, Ananias appears in Acts 23 during Paul's trial in Jerusalem before the Sanhedrin council. Enraged by Paul's defense, Ananias ordered him to be struck on the mouth (Acts 23:1-2). Paul objected, saying, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!" (Acts 23:3). When Paul realized that he was addressing the high priest, he apologized. As Paul continued his defense, a near riot broke out in the Sanhedrin over the issue of the resurrection of the dead—a point of theology that the Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed upon (Acts 23:6-9). The Roman guard took Paul into protective custody (Acts 23:10). Ananias was probably involved in the plot to murder Paul on his way back to court (Acts 23:12-15), but the plot was foiled when the Roman commander found out about it and transported Paul under heavy guard to Caesarea (Acts 23:16-35). Five days later, Ananias traveled to Caesarea and continued to pursue his case against Paul before Governor Felix (Acts 24:1). **Ananias** and other Jewish leaders considered Paul to be the ringleader of a troublemaking Nazarene sect that was stirring up riots among the Jews. Many of the Jews hated **Ananias** because of his ruthlessness and corruption, but he was protected by Rome even after he was deposed as high priest. In AD 66, at the start of the first great Jewish Revolt, **Ananias** was assassinated by an angry mob of anti-Roman revolutionaries. [Who was Ananias in the Bible?](#)

**Albert Barnes on Ananias** - "This Ananias was, doubtless, the son of Nebedinus, (Jos. Ant. xx. chap. v. 3,) who was high priest when Quadratus, who preceded Felix, was president of Syria. He was sent bound to Rome by Quadratus, at the same time with Ananias, the prefect of the temple, that they might give an account of their conduct to Claudius Caesar. Josephus, Ant. b. xx. chap. vi. & 2. But in consequence of the intercession of Agrippa the Younger, they were dismissed, and returned to Jerusalem. Ananias, however, was not restored to the office of high priest; for, when Felix was governor of Judea, this office was filled by Jonathan, who succeeded Ananias. Josephus, Ant. b. xx. chap. x. Jonathan was slain in the temple itself, by the instigation of Felix, by assassins who had been hired for the purpose. This murder is thus described by Josephus, (Ant. b. xx. chap. viii. 5 :) "*Felix bore an ill-will to Jonathan, the high priest, because he frequently gave him admonitions about governing the Jewish affairs better than he did, lest complaints should be made against him, since he had procured of Caesar the appointment of Felix as procurator of Judea.*"



Accordingly, Felix contrived a method by which he might get rid of Jonathan, whose admonitions had become troublesome to him. Felix persuaded one of Jonathan's most faithful friends, of the name Doras, to bring the robbers upon him, and to put him to death" "This was done in Jerusalem. The robbers came into the city as if to worship God, and with daggers, which they had concealed under their garments, they put him to death. After the death of Jonathan, the office of high priest remained vacant, until king Agrippa appointed Ismael, the son of Fabi, to the office. Josephus, Ant. b. xx. chap. viii. 8. It was during this interval, while the office of high priest was vacant, that the events which are here recorded took place. Ananias was then at Jerusalem; and as the office of high priest was vacant, and as he was the last person who had borne the office, it was natural that he should discharge, probably by common consent, its duties, so far at least as to preside in the Sanhedrim. Of these facts Paul would be doubtless apprized; and hence what he said Acts 23:5 was strictly true, and is one of the evidences that Luke's history accords precisely with the peculiar circumstances which then existed. When Luke here calls Ananias "the high 12 priest," he evidently intends not to affirm that he was actually such; but to use the word as the Jews did, as applicable to one who had been ill that office, and who, on that occasion, when the office was vacant, performed its duties. "To smite him on the mouth. To stop him from speaking; to express their indignation at what he had said. The anger of Ananias was excited, because Paul affirmed that all that he had done had been with a good conscience. Their feelings had been excited to the utmost; they regarded him as certainly guilty; they deemed him to be an apostate; and they could not bear it that he, with such coolness and firmness, declared that all his conduct had been under the direction of a good conscience. The injustice of the command of Ananias is apparent to all. A similar instance of violence occurred on the trial of the Saviour, John 18:22" ([Acts 23 Commentary](#))

**Commanded** (2004) ([epitasso](#) from **epí** = upon, over + **tasso** = arrange, appoint or place appropriately) literally means to arrange upon, i.e. order. To appoint over, put in charge; put upon one as a duty. **Epitasso** was a Greek military term, the noun form used of an "orderly array." The root verb **tasso** was used in classical Greek meaning to draw up in order of battle, array, marshal.

**Standing beside** (3936) ([paristemi](#) from **para** = near, beside + **histemi** = place, set) literally means to place or set beside or near and hence to place at someone's disposal. **Paristemi** means to present oneself for service or to put at the service of (sometimes translated "help" Ro 16:2-[note](#))

**Strike** (5180) ([tupto/typto](#) from root "**tup--**" = a blow, cf **tupos** = a figure or print and English "type") means literally to smite, strike, beat or otherwise inflict a blow. **Strike** denotes more than a slap in the face—this word is used of the crowd's beating of Paul in Acts 21:32+ and of the Roman soldier's beating of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 27:30 (Mk 15:19)!

All uses of **tupto** in NT - Matt. 24:49; Matt. 27:30; Mk. 15:19; Lk. 6:29; Lk. 12:45; Lk. 18:13; Lk. 23:48; Acts 18:17; Acts 21:32; Acts 23:2; Acts 23:3; 1 Co. 8:12

**ILLUSTRATION** - Christians must understand that if they are faithful witnesses for Jesus Christ the world will hate them, and when the law permits the world will persecute, and even kill His followers. The world hates Jesus and it will hate those in whom He lives. During the presidential debates between Republican candidates during the latter part of 2007, the media went through an interesting, chameleon-like change with reference to former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee. First, he had no chance. Then he began climbing from the bottom tier of candidates into the upper tier. Until that time, the fickle media seemed to focus on Governor Mitt Romney's Mormon faith, but as Huckabee gained support, they began to pit Huckabee against Romney. When he continued to climb into the top tier of candidates, the media paraded out one bitter, caustic critic after another, until his numbers began to slip, and then some gloated. On Hannity and Colmes, December 19, 2007 (as I recall), there was a clip of some radio personality I had never heard of before, who was ranting against Huckabee, and I will paraphrase: "He claims to be a Christian but he wants to kill people with bombs dropped from forty thousand feet. That may be his kind of Christianity, but THAT IS NOT MY KIND OF CHRISTIANITY!" Arrogance was dripping from every word as the man spoke. Why such vitriol toward Mike Huckabee? Read 1 John 4 for the Lord's answer to that question. This is not a political endorsement of Governor Huckabee, but a reminder of the attitude of the world toward serious Christians. (J. Hunt)

**Acts 23:3 Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?"**

KJV Acts 23:3 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?

NET Acts 23:3 Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit there judging me according to the law, and in violation of the law you order me to be struck?"

GNT Acts 23:3 τ τε Πα λος πρ ς α τ ν ε πεν, Τ ππειν σε μ λλει θε ς, το χε κεκονιαμ νε· κα σ κ θ κρ νων με κατ τ ν ν μον κα παρανομ ν κελε εις με τ ππεσθαι;

NLT Acts 23:3 But Paul said to him, "God will slap you, you corrupt hypocrite! What kind of judge are you to break the law yourself by ordering me struck like that?"

ESV Acts 23:3 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?"

CSB Acts 23:3 Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! You are sitting there judging me according to the law, and in violation of the law are you ordering me to be struck?"

NIV Acts 23:3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!"

NAB Acts 23:3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall. Do you indeed sit in judgment upon me according to the law and yet in violation of the law order me to be struck?"

NKJ Acts 23:3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?"

NJB Acts 23:3 Then Paul said to him, 'God will surely strike you, you whitewashed wall! How can you sit there to judge me according to the Law, and then break the Law by ordering a man to strike me?'

GWN Acts 23:3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you hypocrite! You sit there and judge me by Moses' Teachings and yet you break those teachings by ordering these men to strike me!"

NRS Acts 23:3 At this Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting there to judge me according to the law, and yet in violation of the law you order me to be struck?"

YLT Acts 23:3 then Paul said unto him, 'God is about to smite thee, thou whitewashed wall, and thou -- thou dost sit judging me according to the law, and, violating law, dost order me to be smitten!'

- **God is going to strike you** God did smite him in a remarkable manner; for about five years after this, after his house had been reduced to ashes, in a tumult raised by his own son, he was besieged and taken in the royal palace; where having attempted in vain to hide himself, he was dragged out and slain.
- **you whitewashed wall** Mt 23:27,28
- **Do you sit to try me according to the Law** Lev 19:35; Ps 58:1,2; 82:1,2; 94:20; Eccl 3:16; Amos 5:7; Micah 3:8-11
- **in violation of the Law order me to be struck** Dt 25:1,2; John 7:51; 18:24
- [Video of Paul before the Sanhedrin](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Whitewashed Tombs

## PAUL REBUKES THE HIGH PRIEST "FULL OF DEAD MEN'S BONE!"

**Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you** - In essence Paul was saying, "I won't get you, but God will!" Paul was not a false prophet! Paul's prophecy was fulfilled only a few years later when **Ananias** was at first deposed and then assassinated by anti-Roman Jewish revolutionaries at the outbreak of the first great Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 AD.

**Longenecker** - Indignant at the affront, Paul lashed out at Ananias and accused him of breaking the Jewish law, which safeguarded the rights of defendants and presumed them innocent until proved guilty. Paul had not even been charged with a crime, let alone tried and found guilty. Anyone who behaved as Ananias did, Paul knew, was bound to come under God's judgment. **Paul's words, however, were more prophetic than he realized.** Ananias's final days—despite all his scheming and bribes—were lived as a hunted animal and ended at the hands of his own people. (The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 9: John and Acts) (Bold added)

**Joseph Parker** has an interesting comment - "Now we see quite a new aspect of Paul. He has borne so much that we thought he would bear everything right through to the last; but there was a priestism which Paul could not bear, so he exclaimed, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall"—a mass of clay chalked over; that white robe is not a white character; the linen is fine, but it clothes a ferocious nature. Nor was this mere anger. Paul has been blamed for this little ebullition by men who themselves become angry seven days a week. But I would be found amongst those who applaud the sublime indignation. It was inspired by moral emotion and conviction. The reason of this anger is given. We are bound to defend eternal rectitude; sometimes in defending it we may only seem to be overtaken by human infirmity. It is right to be angry; it is a sin sometimes to appear to be satisfied when the heart is filled with a conviction that things are wrong. Always notice the reason of the anger, and you will find that reason to be not a merely

personal one, as if personal pride had been made to suffer, but a moral one, and, therefore, a comprehensive one, and, therefore, the anger not of a man, but of the race of men. Paul speaks here not for himself only, but for every man, time through and the world over, who suffers wrongfully. The prophecy was fulfilled: the beast was slain; he was dragged out not long afterward and killed by vengeful hands. ([People's Commentary - Acts](#))

**You whitewashed wall!** - Note the contrast of Paul's clean conscience (interior) with the "unclean" interior of Ananias. Guzik comments "We wish we knew *how* Paul said these words. It would have helped to hear Paul's tone of voice; was it an outburst of anger, or was it a calm, collected rebuke with that much more weight to it?. Whatever the tone, the rebuke was entirely accurate and justified. The man who commanded that a defenseless man be punched in the face indeed was a **whitewashed wall**; a white veneer of purity covering over obvious corruption."

Paul may have had reference to Ezekiel's denunciation of false prophets as walls plastered over with whitewash, doomed to fall in the flood of divine judgment (Ezek. 13:10-16+).

**NET Note on whitewashed** - This was an idiom for hypocrisy—just as the wall was painted on the outside but something different on the inside, so this person was not what he appeared or pretended to be. Paul was claiming that the man's response was two-faced (Ezek 13:10–16; Matt 23:27–28). See also Deut 28:22.

A **whitewashed tomb** was another name for a hypocrite a person who pretends to be holy and righteous but in reality is not. **William Hendriksen** comments: "Passover was just around the corner. This meant that the pilgrims, streaming into Jerusalem from every direction, near the city was many a **whitewashed tomb**. With powdered lime dust a few weeks earlier the burial places had been made to look spick-and-span, neat and trim. They had been made conspicuous, lest any pilgrim should render himself ceremonially 'unclean' by inadvertently coming into contact with a corpse or a human bone. ... Yet, on the inside such graves were full of dead men's bones and all kinds of dirt and debris" (New Testament Commentary: Matthew). The expression is found in literature, e.g., in Milton's Tetrachordon (1.16.40), which says of a hypocrite: "his owne house, and the whole neighbourhood/Sees his foule inside through his whited skin."

**THOUGHT** from **David Platt** - Are we focused on **outward** cleanliness instead of **inward** holiness? This is exactly what we've seen all throughout the book of Matthew: The tendency of the scribes and Pharisees to observe rules and regulations, principles and practices on the outside, while neglecting humility and purity on the inside. And Jesus reminds them through this fierce denunciation: Purity always begins in the heart. You don't clean the outside of a cup; you clean the inside, and the outside will become clean. **When all you do is focus on the outside, when your religion is all about external improvement, you become like a whitewashed tomb.** Oh, hear this: **Religion is a subtly dangerous cover-up for spiritual deadness.** Do we see this in our lives? We go to church, we attend small group, we read the Bible, we walk through the motions, we check off the boxes, but if we're not careful, we miss the point. In all our efforts at moral renewal, trying to be better people, we only cover up the curse of sin that lies at the core of who we are. Religion is a subtly dangerous cover-up for spiritual deadness, so we must ask ourselves: Is there life inside us? Is there inner transformation that is happening within us? Are our hearts being changed so that we desire Christ more than we desire the things of this world? Is there love, is their affection for Christ at the root of our obedience? Is Christianity a matter of duty for you, or is it a matter of delight? Is holiness being joyfully cultivated in your heart? (The Danger of Damnation)

**Hunt** - Those members of the Sanhedrin may or may not have been shocked by the order from Ananias to strike Paul in the mouth, but we can be sure they are shocked now! Observe that Paul does not ask someone present to strike Ananias, nor does he express a desire to do so himself. He says, "God is going to strike you" (which demonstrates a far more biblical understanding of divine judgment than members of the Sanhedrin possessed).

**Robertson** calls this "a picturesque way of calling Ananias a hypocrite, undoubtedly true, but not a particularly tactful thing for a prisoner to say to his judge, not to say Jewish high priest. Besides, Paul had hurled back at him the word *tuptein* (smite) in his command, putting it first in the sentence (*tuptein se mellei ho theos*) in strong emphasis. Clearly Paul felt that he, not Ananias, was living as a good citizen in God's commonwealth"

Jesus had made a similar denunciation of the Pharisees in his scathing series of rebukes (8 times He says "Woe to you!") in Matthew 23

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like **whitewashed tombs** which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. "So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Mt 23:27,28)

**William Barclay** comments on Paul's response - So Paul rounds upon him, calling him a white-washed wall. To touch a dead body

was for an Israelite to incur ceremonial defilement; it was therefore the custom to white-wash tombs so that none might be touched by mistake. So Paul is in effect calling the high priest a white-washed tomb. It was indeed a crime to speak evil of a ruler of the people (Exodus 22:28). Paul knew perfectly well that Ananias was high priest (SOME DO NOT AGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT)

**MacArthur** - Some have wondered how to harmonize Paul's strong language with his declaration to the Corinthians that "when we are reviled, we bless" (1 Cor. 4:12). They point out, in contrast, the example of Jesus, who "while being reviled, did not revile in return; while suffering, uttered no threats" (1 Pet. 2:23). When Jesus was struck in violation of the law, He merely asked, "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" (John 18:23). The answer is, of course, that Paul was not Jesus. Jesus was the sinless Son of God. Paul, while no doubt the godliest man who ever lived, was still a sinner. He vividly described his battle with indwelling sin in Romans 7:14ff.; this was one time when the flesh prevailed. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Whitewashed** (3867)(**koniao**) means to daub with lime, to plaster. It alludes to the practice of smearing something over with lime and thus to whitewash or plaster over. The Jews were accustomed to whitewash the entrances to their sepulchres, as a warning against defilement by touching them. Figuratively **koniao** is used of those who are like whitewashed walls and so are impostors or hypocrites. Used figuratively only twice, by Jesus (Mt 23:27) and Paul (Acts 23:3), both in the [perfect tense](#) which depicts this as the state or condition of those described as "whitewashed." Jesus' use is particularly biting and ironic for He is describing the Pharisees as representing the very thing they avoid. They are not what they appear to be, and **they** (not tombs!) are to be avoided as unclean even though they claim to be clean. Used 3x in the Septuagint -Deut. 27:2; Deut. 27:4; Prov. 21:9.

**Gilbrant** - **koniaō** is a verb derived from **konia** which means "dust" and, by extension, other powdery substances like ashes, lime, gypsum, or even sand. In Deuteronomy 27:2,4 Moses told the Israelites to set up stones 40 miles north of Jerusalem on Mount Ebal, to "whitewash" them, and to inscribe the Law on them for everyone to see. The Septuagint version of Proverbs 21:9 gives the only other Old Testament usage: "It is better to live in the corner of a housetop than in plastered (rooms) with unrighteousness" (writer's translation). The New Testament uses **koniaō** twice. In His denunciation of the Pharisees, Jesus compared their religious facade with whitewashed sepulchers (Matthew 23:27). Whitewashing the entrances to tombs made them more noticeable so people would avoid touching them and defiling themselves. In Acts 23:3 Paul called the high priest a "whited wall," evidently intending to label him a hypocrite as Jesus had the Pharisees in Matthew 23:27 (compare Paul's reaction to Elymas in Acts 13:10). The expression may have been a proverbial statement Paul leveled at Ananias. Even though Ananias was sitting in religious judgment, he had Paul slapped, contrary to the same Law which he was required to uphold.

**Longenecker** - Ananias's order to strike the defendant was in character. But Paul's retort seems quite out of character for a follower of the one who "when they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats" (1 Peter 2:23). Paul, it seems, momentarily lost his composure—as evidently Ananias hoped he would—and put himself at a disadvantage before the council. We cannot excuse this sudden burst of anger, though we must not view it self-righteously. We are made of the same stuff as Paul, and his provocation was greater than most of us will ever face. Yet his quickness in acknowledging his wrong (Acts 23:5) was more than many of us are willing to do. (The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 9: John and Acts)

## PAUL REVEALS THE PRIEST'S PROBLEM

**Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?"**- This man was sitting in judgment to judge according to the law and yet he was violating the law by commanding that Paul be struck. It was a faulty judgment by Ananias and he was the one that was in the wrong. Paul is calling him a hypocrite, implying how preposterous that a "whitewashed" tomb would judge him! Deuteronomy 25:1-2 says only a man found guilty can be beaten, and Paul had not yet been found guilty of anything.

**Andrews** - It is amazing how often those who sit in judgment are the ones who are in the wrong. (ED: Compare some of the decisions being handed down by liberal, godless judges in American courts!)

**NET Note** - In violation of the law. Paul was claiming that punishment was given before the examination was complete (m. [Sanhedrin 3:6–8](#) - scroll down). Luke's noting of this detail shows how quickly the leadership moved to react against Paul.

**Jack Arnold** - This slap in the mouth caused Paul's temper to flare, and he caustically said, "You bare faced hypocrite!" The only whitewashed walls in Jerusalem were tombstones. Paul was saying, "You are like a tombstone, whitewashed on the outside but within you are filled with rotten flesh and the bones of the dead!" In essence, Paul said to the high priest, "You stinking hypocrite!" Paul probably lost his cool here but he was right to stand upon his rights as a Jew, for it was against the law of Israel to strike a Jew before he was proven guilty. When Paul said, "God is going to strike you," this was a hidden prediction for Ananias was killed by an assassin in 64 A.D. Was this blow to the mouth part of God's loving, providential care of Paul? Yes, and God somehow

used it for His own glory. Even the evil acts of men somehow bring about the secret plan of God. "This man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death" (Acts 2:23).

**Longnecker** adds "'Paul's words, however, were more prophetic than he realized. Ananias' final days – despite all his scheming and bribes – were lived as a hunted animal and ended at the hands of his own people.'" (EBC)

### Acts 23:4 But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

KJV Acts 23:4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

NET Acts 23:4 Those standing near him said, "Do you dare insult God's high priest?"

GNT Acts 23:4 ο ὁ παρεστ τες ε παν, Τ ν ρχιερ α το θεο λοιδορε ς;

NLT Acts 23:4 Those standing near Paul said to him, "Do you dare to insult God's high priest?"

KJV Acts 23:4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

ESV Acts 23:4 Those who stood by said, "Would you revile God's high priest?"

CSB Acts 23:4 And those standing nearby said, "Do you dare revile God's high priest?"

NIV Acts 23:4 Those who were standing near Paul said, "You dare to insult God's high priest?"

NAB Acts 23:4 The attendants said, "Would you revile God's high priest?"

NKJ Acts 23:4 And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

NJB Acts 23:4 The attendants said, 'Are you insulting the high priest of God?

GWN Acts 23:4 The men standing near Paul said to him, "You're insulting God's chief priest!"

NRS Acts 23:4 Those standing nearby said, "Do you dare to insult God's high priest?"

YLT Acts 23:4 And those who stood by said, 'The chief priest of God dost thou revile?'

- [Video of Paul before the Sanhedrin](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DO YOU DARE?

**Parker** quips "It is curious to notice, and most instructive, how religious some people suddenly become. They that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high-priest?" Hypocrites, every one! Ananias rose and fell in their estimation according to circumstances, which Ananias could not control. He was high-priest when it suited them; he was a common man when it suited their purpose to treat him so. They were conventionalists; they simply accepted the spirit of office and of ceremonialism, and did not care to inquire how far it connected itself with personal holiness and expressed personal worth."

**Andrews** - Paul didn't disrespect the office of high priest, but the man that occupied the office. He didn't rebuke the office, but the man that held that office. (Ibid)

**But the bystanders** ([paristemi](#)) said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" ([archiereus](#)) - The idea is Paul had spoken in a highly insulting manner. And since Paul knew the law, he immediately realized he had acted in a wrong manner against the office per se (independent of the corrupt character of Ananias). Note phrase **God's high priest**, implying he belonged to God, but hardly the case in this instance, for he was evil and corrupt in the eyes of God (Pr 15:3).

**A T Robertson** - As God's representative in spite of his bad character (Deut. 17:8-9). Here was a charge of irreverence, to say the least. The office called for respect.

**Jack Arnold** - We are not told why Paul did not recognize Ananias. Perhaps he was dressed more informally than usual, but the most probable explanation is that Paul had eye trouble and may not have recognized him. Whatever, Paul immediately admitted his mistake and apologized for his actions, for he knew the Old Testament clearly taught respect for governmental officials.

**Revile** ([3058](#)) ([loidoreo](#) from [loidoros](#) = reviling, railing, one who reviles as in 1 Cor 5:11) means to subject one to verbal abuse, and to reproach, vilify, speak in a highly insulting manner, insult strongly. **Revile** implies a scurrilous, abusive attack prompted by

anger or hatred. **Rail** (against) means to scold someone using harsh, insolent, or abusive language. Used only 4x in the NT - Jn. 9:28; Acts 23:4; 1 Co. 4:12; 1 Pet. 2:23. The root noun **loidoros** appears in the lists of vices that characterize unbelievers (1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Cor 6:10). The adjective loidoria is used in 1 Ti 5:14 to describe the reviling activity of Satan, and 1 Pe 3:9 forbids Christians to do it.

**John MacArthur** wrote, "The use of **loidoreo** shows that the people felt Paul's strong language was not some calculated legal ploy to take advantage of Ananias's violation of the law but an expression of anger... Although an evil man and a disgrace to his office, the high priest still occupied a God-ordained position of authority. He was not to be reviled but respected (Dt 17:8-12)."

**Hanze** in the TDNT wrote that ""The high-priest stands before God. To abuse him, especially in the discharge of his office, is blasphemy."

**Acts 23:5 And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.'"**

KJV Acts 23:5 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.

NET Acts 23:5 Paul replied, "I did not realize, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, 'You must not speak evil about a ruler of your people.'"

GNT Acts 23:5 φη τε Πα λος, Ο κ δειν, δε λφο , τι στ ν ρχιερε ς· γ γραπται γ ρ τι ρχοντα το λαο σου ο κ ρε ς κακ ς.

NLT Acts 23:5 "I'm sorry, brothers. I didn't realize he was the high priest," Paul replied, "for the Scriptures say, 'You must not speak evil of any of your rulers.' "

ESV Acts 23:5 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.'"

CSB Acts 23:5 "I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest," replied Paul. "For it is written, You must not speak evil of a ruler of your people."

NIV Acts 23:5 Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.' "

NAB Acts 23:5 Paul answered, "Brothers, I did not realize he was the high priest. For it is written, 'You shall not curse a ruler of your people.'"

NKJ Acts 23:5 Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"

NJB Acts 23:5 Paul answered, 'Brothers, I did not realise it was the high priest; certainly scripture says, "You will not curse your people's leader." ' "

GWN Acts 23:5 Paul answered, "Brothers, I didn't know that he is the chief priest. After all, Scripture says, 'Don't speak evil about a ruler of your people.'"

NRS Acts 23:5 And Paul said, "I did not realize, brothers, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a leader of your people.'"

YLT Acts 23:5 and Paul said, 'I did not know, brethren, that he is chief priest: for it hath been written, Of the ruler of thy people thou shalt not speak evil;'

- **I was not aware** - Acts 24:17
- **You shall not speak evil** - Exodus 22:28; Eccl 10:20; 2 Peter 2:10; Jude 1:8,9
- [Video of Paul before the Sanhedrin](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**I DID NOT  
KNOW**

**And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest([archiereus](#))** - Note he uses the word brethren again, this

time likely in a respectful and conciliatory sense. That Paul would not know Ananias would not be an unreasonable assertion because Paul had been gone from Jerusalem almost 20 years. Either Paul did not recognize the speaker, he did not know he was serving unofficially in the capacity of the high priest, or he is underscoring the fact that Ananias was not the official high priest.

**William Barclay** - Ananias was notorious as a glutton, a thief, a rapacious robber and a quisling in the Roman service. Paul's answer really means, "This man sitting there--I never knew a man like that could be high priest of Israel."

**Brian Bell** mentions four possible interpretations of Paul's statement that he was not aware Ananias was the high priest - [1] Paul didn't know his tormentor's identity because of his defective vision? [2] Paul was speaking in irony saying, "He didn't act like a high priest; so how could I recognize him as such when he was totally out of character." [3] Possible Ananias wasn't wearing his priestly garments. It's also probable Paul did not know Ananias personally because he had not had contact with the Sanhedrin for 20 years. [4] Paul completely lost his cool? (failure in self-control)

**A T Robertson** adds - "The Greek naturally means that Paul did not know that it was the high priest who gave the order to smite his mouth. If this view is taken, several things may be said by way of explanation. The high priest may not have had on his official dress as the meeting was called hurriedly by Lysias. Paul had been away so long that he may not have known Ananias on sight. And then Paul may have had poor eyesight or the high priest may not have been sitting in the official seat. Another way of explaining it is to say that Paul was so indignant, even angry, at the command that he spoke without considering who it was that gave the order. The Greek allows this idea also. At any rate Paul at once recognizes the justice of the point made against him. He had been guilty of irreverence against the office of high priest as the passage from Exodus 22:18 (LXX) shows and confesses his fault, but the rebuke was deserved. Jesus did not threaten (1 Peter 2:23) when smitten on the cheek (John 18:22), but he did protest against the act and did not turn the other cheek.

**For it is written** - Quoting Ex 22:28. "You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people." What Paul is doing in essence is immediately confessing his guilt in this matter, a good pattern for all of us to follow when we are convicted of our sin.

**Written** (1125) is **grapho** in the perfect tense signifying it was written in at a point in time in the past and stands written or valid.

**'YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.'** - Paul is acknowledging his error and certainly recognized the position of the high priest, even if he did not respect the person who was high priest. Eccl 10:20 says "in your bedchamber do not curse a king." And note the fact that Paul quoted the passage demonstrates his respect for the Word of God and his submission to the Word of God.

**MacArthur** - Paul's reaction was that of a mature Christian. He saw his sin in relation to how holy God was, not how bad the high priest was. And when he realized his sin, he immediately confessed it and submitted to the authority of Scripture. Christians who thus deal with sin in their lives will save themselves much chastisement (cf. 1 Cor. 11:31). (Ibid)

**Wiersbe** - When called to account for what he had said, Paul did not apologize. Rather, he showed respect for the office but not for the man. Ananias was indeed one of the most corrupt men ever to be named high priest. He stole tithes from the other priests and did all he could to increase his authority. He was known as a brutal man who cared more for Rome's favor than for Israel's welfare. (BEC)

**John Phillips** - "The man was despicable, but the office was venerable. Paul, showing his own instinctive knowledge of the law and his willing submission to the law, paid his respects to the position if not the person." (Exploring Acts)

**Jack Arnold** - When Paul was wrong, he did not make excuses. He was instantly repentant. When we do something wrong, we should immediately rectify it if we can. How many Christians today show disrespect for governmental leaders. They may refer to the president of the U.S.A. as an "idiot" or the congress as "clowns" and make all kinds of caustic remarks. Christian, you are to obey your government and show respect for leaders regardless of who they are or how bad they are. You do not have to agree but you must show respect. Any disrespect for government officials may catch up with us someday if persecution ever breaks out in our country.

**Brian Bell** comments that "In a heated moment Paul said the wrong thing to the wrong person, lost his opportunity to receive a fair trial, and, most importantly, blown his chance to explain the gospel. Result? The situation turns ugly, & Paul now has to think fast just to get out alive."

**Richard Longenecker** on the fate of **Ananias** - When the war with Rome began in A.D. 66, the nationalists burned his house (cf. [Jos. War 17:6](#)) and he was forced to flee to the palace of Herod the Great in the northern part of Jerusalem (ibid., 429 [xvii.6]). Ananias was finally trapped while hiding in an aqueduct on the palace grounds and was killed along with his brother Hezekiah (ibid., 441-42 [xvii.9]). (The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 9: John and Acts)

**Acts 23:6 But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"**

KJV Acts 23:6 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.

NET Acts 23:6 Then when Paul noticed that part of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, he shouted out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead!"

GNT Acts 23:6 Γνω ς ὁ Πα λος τι τ ν μ ρος στ ν Σαδδουκα ων τ ὀ τερον Φαρισα ων κραζεν ν τ συνεδρ , νδρες δελφο , γ Φαρισα ς ε μι, υ ς Φαρισα ων· περ λπ δος κα ναστ σεως νεκρ ν [ γ ] κρ νομαι.

NLT Acts 23:6 Paul realized that some members of the high council were Sadducees and some were Pharisees, so he shouted, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, as were my ancestors! And I am on trial because my hope is in the resurrection of the dead!"

ESV Acts 23:6 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."

CSB Acts 23:6 When Paul realized that one part of them were Sadducees and the other part were Pharisees, he cried out in the Sanhedrin, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees! I am being judged because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead!"

NIV Acts 23:6 Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead."

NAB Acts 23:6 Paul was aware that some were Sadducees and some Pharisees, so he called out before the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees; (I) am on trial for hope in the resurrection of the dead."

NKJ Acts 23:6 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; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"

NJB Acts 23:6 Now Paul was well aware that one party was made up of Sadducees and the other of Pharisees, so he called out in the Sanhedrin, 'Brothers, I am a Pharisee and the son of Pharisees. It is for our hope in the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.'

GWN Acts 23:6 When Paul saw that some of them were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he shouted in the council, "Brothers, I'm a Pharisee and a descendant of Pharisees. I'm on trial because I expect that the dead will come back to life."

NRS Acts 23:6 When Paul noticed that some were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he called out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead."

YLT Acts 23:6 and Paul having known that the one part are Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, cried out in the sanhedrim, 'Men, brethren, I am a Pharisee -- son of a Pharisee -- concerning hope and rising again of dead men I am judged.'

- **Paul began crying out in the Council** Mt 10:16
- **I am a Pharisee** Acts 26:5; Phil 3:5
- **I am on trial for the hope** Acts 24:15,21; 26:6-8; 28:20
- [Video of Paul before the Sanhedrin](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**THE RESURRECTION OUR  
BLESSED HOPE**



The believer's resurrection is not a "hope so," but a "hope sure!" It will happen in God's timing and we will be resurrected, changed in the twinkling of an eye and given glorified (and sinless) bodies which we will live in forever and ever. Amen!

**But perceiving ([ginosko](#)) that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees - Perceive** means to become aware of through one's senses. Being a former Pharisee, Paul was well aware of the significant theological differences between the two dominant Jewish religious parties. See [What are the differences between the Sadducees and Pharisees?](#)

**Sadducees (4523)** see word study of [saddoukaios](#)

[Holman Bible Dictionary](#) - "The Sadducees were the aristocrats of the time. They were the party of the rich and the high priestly families. They were in charge of the Temple and its services. They claimed to be descendants of Zadok, high priest in the time of Solomon. However, the true derivation of their name is unknown. In all our literature, they stand in opposition to the Pharisees. They sought to conserve the beliefs and practices of the past. They opposed the oral law, accepting the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, as the ultimate authority. The Sadducees were materialistic in their outlook. They did not believe in life after death or any reward or punishment beyond this life. They denied the existence of angels and demons. They did not believe that God was concerned with what people did. Rather people were totally free. They were politically oriented, supporters of ruling powers, whether Seleucids or Romans. They wanted nothing to threaten their position and wealth, so they strongly opposed Jesus"

[Who were the Sadducees?](#)

**Pharisees (5330)** see word study of [pharisaios](#)

[Holman Bible Dictionary](#) - "Pharisees The Pharisees constituted the most important group. They appear in the Gospels as the opponents of Jesus. Paul claimed that he was a Pharisee before becoming a Christian (Phil. 3:5). They were the most numerous of the groups, although Josephus stated that they numbered only about six thousand. They controlled the synagogues and exercised great control over the general population. "No surviving writing gives us information about the origin of the Pharisees. The earliest reference to them is dated in the time of Jonathan (160-143 B.C.), where Josephus refers to Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. Their good relations with the rulers ended in the time of John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.). They came to power again when Salome Alexandra became queen (76 B.C.). "The name "Pharisee" means "the separated ones." It may mean that they separated themselves from the masses of the people or that they separated themselves to the study and interpretation of the law. It is usually assumed that they were the spiritual descendants of the Hasidim, the loyal fighters for religious freedom in the time of Judas Maccabeus. They appear to be responsible for the transformation of Judaism from a religion of sacrifice to one of law. They were the developers of the oral tradition, the teachers of the two-fold law: written and oral. They saw the way to God as being through obedience to the law. They were the progressives of the day, willing to adopt new ideas and adapt the law to new situations. "The Pharisees were strongly monotheistic. They accepted all the Old Testament as authoritative. They affirmed the reality of angels and demons. They had a firm belief in life beyond the grave and a resurrection of the body. They were missionary, seeking the conversion of Gentiles (Matt. 23:15). They saw God as concerned with the life of a person without denying that the individual was responsible for how he or she lived. They had little interest in politics. The Pharisees opposed Jesus because He refused to accept the teachings of the oral law"

[Who were the Pharisees?](#)

**Paul began crying out in the Council ([sunedrion](#)) - Crying out** is [krazo](#) in the [imperfect tense](#) signifying continual action, over and over. Paul must have been aware that this would create an uproar and make it impossible for him to share the Gospel.

**Brethren** - This is the third time (Acts 23:1, 5, 6) Paul addresses the Council with the relatively respectful greeting of **brethren** (even though he is "crying out.")

**I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees** - Paul wrote to the church at Philippi that he was "circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless." (Php 3:5-6+)

Then Paul made a claim that he must have realized would set the Sanhedrin on their ears. In the Sanhedrin there were Pharisees and Sadducees whose beliefs were often opposed. The Pharisees believed in the minutiae of the oral Law; the Sadducees accepted only the written Law. The Pharisees believed in predestination; the Sadducees believed in free-will. The Pharisees believed in angels and spirits; the Sadducees did not. Above all, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead; the Sadducees did not.

**I am on trial** ([krino](#) in present passive = being judged) **for the hope and resurrection of the dead!** - He is correct! The foundation of the good news of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ is alive and will one day raise the dead. The teaching of that "**hope**," that truth caused a reaction among the "intelligentsia" (Acts 17:32+) and now among the Jews. The truth of the resurrection brought derision, division and defiance in Paul's day and it still does today. So dear proclaimer of the Gospel, do not be surprised when they "put you on trial" for telling them of **the resurrection of the dead!**

The "**hope**" (the absolute assurance) is that the dead will be resurrected (cf Jesus' teaching in Jn 5:29 - of course Paul's emphasis was on the "resurrection of life," not the "resurrection of judgment"). Recall that the previous uproar was incited by a single word (**Gentiles** in Acts 22:21+), just as was this uproar (**resurrection**)! And in both circumstances Paul was unable to preach the Gospel! Paul's later statement in Acts 24:20-21 does suggest that perhaps raising the **resurrection** issue (pun intended) was not the best tactic, especially in view of his desire for the salvation of the Jews as recorded in Ro 9:1-4+. (See "[Two Views](#)" below)

**Paul** alludes to this great future event again in Acts 24 before the governor Felix...

"Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council, other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, 'For the **resurrection of the dead** I am on trial before you today.'" (Acts 24:20-21+)

**Hope** (1680)([elpis](#)) in the NT almost always is used with a positive spiritual sense, that God will do good to us in the future. It usually describes an absolute assurance of future good, in this case that our bodies will rise again even after we die.

#### Related Resources:

- [Blessed Hope: Part 1](#)
- [Blessed Hope: Part 2](#)
- [Resources on the Blessed Hope](#)

**Resurrection** (386)([anastasis](#) from **ana** = up, again + **histemi** = to cause to stand) literally means "to stand again" or "to cause to stand again" and most NT uses refer to a physical body rising from the dead or coming back to life after having once died. The **resurrection** is distinguished from belief in reincarnation, which usually involves a series of rebirths from which the soul may seek release. Resurrection has primary reference to the body. The resurrection is the central, defining doctrine and claim of the gospel for as Paul wrote "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain." (1Cor 15:14)

**Anastasis** uses in Acts - Acts 1:22; Acts 2:31; Acts 4:2; Acts 4:33; Acts 17:18; Acts 17:32; Acts 23:6; Acts 23:8; Acts 24:15; Acts 24:21; Acts 26:23

**Jack Arnold** - It seems to me that Paul assumed his cause for a fair trial was lost since the high priest was a Sadducee, so Paul made a last ditch appeal to the Pharisees in the group. The Pharisees were the conservatives and the Sadducees were the liberals. Sadducees did not believe in the immortality of the soul, or a future resurrection of the body, or in heaven or hell, or in demons or angels. They denied all elements of the supernatural. The Pharisees, however, were the supernaturalists, so Paul appeals to them. Paul merely stated he was on trial because he did believe in the resurrection of the dead, not just of Israel but also of the Lord Jesus Christ. For Paul, the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of all Old Testament and New Testament believers was intimately connected. "For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:16, 17).

## TWO VIEWS OF PAUL'S RESURRECTION DECLARATION

Some like **Robertson** see Paul's declaration here as a **strategic spiritual move** - Perceiving (second aorist ingressive of *ginōskō*). Paul quickly saw that his cause was ruined before the Sanhedrin by his unwitting attack on the high priest. It was impossible to get a fair hearing. Hence, Vincent says, "Paul, with great tact, seeks to bring the two parties of the council into collision with each other." So Alford argues with the motto "divide and conquer." Farrar condemns Paul and takes [Acts 24:21](#) as a confession of error here, but that is reading into Paul's word about the resurrection more than he says. Page considers Luke's report meagre and unsatisfactory. Rackham thinks that the trial was already started and that Paul repeated part of his speech of the day before when "the Sadducees received his words with ostentatious scepticism and ridicule: this provoked counter-expressions of sympathy and credulity among the Pharisees." But all this is inference. We do not have to adopt the Jesuitical principle that the end justifies the means in order to see shrewdness and hard sense in what Paul said and did. Paul knew, of course, that the Sanhedrin was nearly evenly divided between Pharisees and Sadducees, for he himself had been a Pharisee.

Word Pictures in the New Testament.

Others like **Pastor Ray Stedman** see this as a **spiritual failure by Paul**. And so Stedman as says "During our studies through Acts, I am sure you have felt in your own heart, again and again, the impact of the faith, the prayers, and the power of Paul -- Christ's mightiest missionary apostle. Who would ever have dreamed that this mighty apostle would eventually fall into the devil's trap and **disobey the Spirit of God**? But that is exactly what we have seen happening to this great man as he neared Jerusalem but was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go any further. And yet, out of the passion of his heart to be used of God to reach his people, Israel, and to bear witness to this unbelieving nation -- motivated by the highest of desires -- he nevertheless disobeyed what God clearly told him to do. He continued on and thus fell into great difficulty....Probably the subtlest temptation of all is to be tempted to do what is right, to do what God wants done, but to do it on our own time schedule and not be willing to await the unfolding of God's program. And that is what finally trapped Paul." ([See below](#) or Read his full sermon - [Acts 22:30-23:35 Love That Never Lets Go](#))

### **Acts 23:7 As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided**

KJV Acts 23:7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

NET Acts 23:7 When he said this, an argument began between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

GNT Acts 23:7 το το δ α το ε π ντος γ νετο στ σις τ ν Φαρισα ων κα Σαδδουκα ων κα σχ σθη τ πλθος.

NLT Acts 23:7 This divided the council-- the Pharisees against the Sadducees--

KJV Acts 23:7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

ESV Acts 23:7 And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

CSB Acts 23:7 When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

NIV Acts 23:7 When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

NAB Acts 23:7 When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the group became divided.

NKJ Acts 23:7 And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided.

NJB Acts 23:7 As soon as he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was split between the two parties.

GWN Acts 23:7 After Paul said that, the Pharisees and Sadducees began to quarrel, and the men in the meeting were divided.

NRS Acts 23:7 When he said this, a dissension began between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

YLT Acts 23:7 And he having spoken this, there came a dissension of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, and the crowd was divided,

- **there arose** Acts 14:4; Ps 55:9; Mt 10:34; John 7:40-43
- [Video of Paul before the Sanhedrin](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **DOCTRINAL FLASHPOINT! CONTENTION IN THE COUNCIL**

**Flashpoint** means the point at which something is ready to blow up. It is something that causes violence or conflict to flare up, a critical moment beyond which a situation will inevitably erupt into violence.

**As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the [Pharisees](#) and [Sadducees](#), and the assembly was divided** -The Sadducees dominated the Sanhedrin, which was authorized to function something like a supreme court over issues pertaining to Jews. They were subject to Roman authority, but Rome found it expedient to leave religious matters in their hands. They were even authorized to deal with religious concerning Jews in cities outside Palestine, as the letter authorizing young Saul of Tarsus to export the persecution of Christians to Damascus illustrates.

**Dissension** (4714) (**stasis** from **histemi** = to stand) means first a stance or posture (Heb 9:8), then figuratively sedition, an insurrection or an uprising, the very accusation made against Paul (Acts 24:5). Luke uses **stasis** in the present context to describe "a **dissension**" or disagreement among those expected to cooperate (Acts 23:7). Clearly local Roman leaders feared insurrections, as for example the "town clerk" of Ephesus (Acts 19:35) who declared "we are in danger of being accused of a **riot** (stasis) in connection with today's events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering." Note that **stásis** applies to civil unrest while **pólemos** (war) refers to foreign strife.

All NT uses of **stasis** - Mk. 15:7; Lk. 23:19; Lk. 23:25; Acts 15:2; Acts 19:40; Acts 23:7; Acts 23:10; Acts 24:5; Heb. 9:8

**Was divided** (4977) (**schizo** gives us English [schism](#)) means to split, rend, divide or cause to separate violently or abruptly. For example, it is used literally of splitting the veil in the Temple from top to bottom (Mt 27:51, Mk 15:38, Lk 23:45), of tearing Jesus' garments (Jn 19:24), and of tearing a net (Jn 21:11). Schizo is used figuratively by Luke in Acts 14:4 and here Acts 23:7 of a division between men or parties ([factions](#)), much like the meaning of our English word [schism](#).

**Jack Andrews** quips "The doctrinal issue had split the council—the whole multitude had taken sides—there were no innocent bystanders or fence straddlers!...They had come together to condemn Paul and now they were coming apart because of Paul. The doctrinal issue was so divisive—there are many church goers and church shoppers and church hoppers that want to find a "church" that does not teach doctrine because doctrine is so divisive! These folks will not believe the truth because they will not receive the truth. They will not heed the truth because they will not hear the truth. (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts - Volume 6).

### **Acts 23:8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all**

KJV Acts 23:8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

NET Acts 23:8 (For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.)

GNT Acts 23:8 Σαδδουκαοι μν γρ λγουσιν μ ε ναι ν στασιν μεττε γγελον μετε πνεμα, Φαρισαοι δ μολογοσιν τ μφτερα.

NLT Acts 23:8 for the Sadducees say there is no resurrection or angels or spirits, but the Pharisees believe in all of these.

ESV Acts 23:8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

CSB Acts 23:8 For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, and no angel or spirit, but the Pharisees affirm them all.

NIV Acts 23:8 (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.)

NAB Acts 23:8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection or angels or spirits, while the Pharisees acknowledge all three.

NKJ Acts 23:8 For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection-- and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.

NJB Acts 23:8 For the Sadducees say there is neither resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, while the Pharisees accept all three.

GWN Acts 23:8 (The Sadducees say that the dead won't come back to life and that angels and spirits don't exist. The Pharisees believe in all these things.)

NRS Acts 23:8 (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.)

YLT Acts 23:8 for Sadducees, indeed, say there is no rising again, nor messenger, nor spirit, but Pharisees confess both.

- Acts 4:1; Mt 22:23; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27
- [Video of Paul before the Sanhedrin](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ANTI-SUPERNATURALISM IS "SAD YOU SEE!"

Apologies for the bad pun! You did "get it" didn't you?

**For (gar)** is a term of explanation. Luke is explaining what the radical schism between these two sects.

**The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit-** They were like Thomas Jefferson, who was an anti-supernaturalist, and took the extreme measure to cut out all of the supernatural passages in the Bible! (See [What is the Thomas Jefferson Bible?](#))

**But the Pharisees acknowledge** (confess, affirm, accept) **them all** - The Pharisees were staunchly conservative and believed in the reality of all three subjects, while the Sadducees were theological liberals who were basically anti-supernaturalists. On this belief see the writings of Josephus -- [Josephus Wars 2.8.14](#); [Josephus Antiquities 18.1.3](#) (scroll down).

**Acknowledge** (3670) ([homologeō](#) from **homos** = one and the same or together with+ **legō** = to say; confess from **con** = together, **fateor** = to say.) literally means to say the same thing as another and so to agree in one's statements with, to acknowledge, to admit the truth of (an accusation). Uses in Acts - Acts 7:17; Acts 23:8; Acts 24:14;

**MacArthur** - F. F. Bruce notes that "a Sadducee could not become a Christian without abandoning the distinctive theological position of his party; a Pharisee could become a Christian and remain a Pharisee—in the early decades of Christianity, at least" (*The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 453). The Scriptures record Pharisees who became Christians, including Nicodemus (John 3:1) and others (Acts 15:5), but no Sadducees. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Acts 23:9 And there occurred a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"**

KJV Acts 23:9 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.** (Only in Textus Receptus)

NET Acts 23:9 There was a great commotion, and some experts in the law from the party of the Pharisees stood up and protested strongly, "We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

GNT Acts 23:9 γνετο δ κραυγ μεγαλη, κα ναστντες τινς τν γραμματων το μρους τν Φαρισαων διεμχοντο λγοντες, Οδνκακνερσκομεν ντ νθρπτοτ·εδπνεμα λλησεν ατ γγελος;

NLT Acts 23:9 So there was a great uproar. Some of the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees jumped up and began to argue forcefully. "We see nothing wrong with him," they shouted. "Perhaps a spirit or an angel spoke to him."

KJV Acts 23:9 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.

ESV Acts 23:9 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?"

CSB Acts 23:9 The shouting grew loud, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party got up and argued vehemently: "We find nothing evil in this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

NIV Acts 23:9 There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. "We find nothing wrong with this man," they said. "What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

NAB Acts 23:9 A great uproar occurred, and some scribes belonging to the Pharisee party stood up and sharply argued, "We find nothing wrong with this man. Suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

NKJ Acts 23:9 Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God."

NJB Acts 23:9 The shouting grew louder, and some of the scribes from the Pharisees' party stood up and protested strongly, 'We find nothing wrong with this man. Suppose a spirit has spoken to him, or an angel?'

GWN Acts 23:9 The shouting became very loud. Some of the scribes were Pharisees who argued their position forcefully. They said, "We don't find anything wrong with this man. Maybe a spirit or an angel actually spoke to him!"

NRS Acts 23:9 Then a great clamor arose, and certain scribes of the Pharisees' group stood up and contended, "We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

YLT Acts 23:9 And there came a great cry, and the scribes of the Pharisees' part having arisen, were striving, saying, 'No evil do we find in this man; and if a spirit spake to him, or a messenger, we may not fight against God;'

- **We find nothing wrong with this man** Acts 25:25; 26:31; 1 Samuel 24:17; Pr 16:7; Luke 23:4,14,15,22
- **suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him** Acts 23:8; 9:4; 22:7,17,18; 26:14-19; 27:23; John 12:29
- **let us not fight against God.**(Only In KJV - [Textus Receptus](#)) - Acts 5:39; 11:17; 1 Cor 10:22
- [Video of Paul before the Sanhedrin](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE COUNCIL MELTS DOWN AND EXPLODES

**And there occurred a great uproar** - Not just an **uproar** but a "**great**" (megas) **uproar**, a a state of great commotion, noise, and confusion! Imagine what was going through the Roman Commander's mind! "O no, not again!!!"

**Uproar** ("shouting grew loud" CSB, "shouting became very loud" GWN) (2906)([krauge](#) from [krazo](#) = clamor or cry = a word like "croak" ~ suggests a rough and guttural sound = croaking of ravens = croak or cry out with a loud, raucous voice like donkey in Job 6:5, childbirth Is 26:17, war cry in Josh 6:16) can refer to a chorus of voices (one voice in Lk 1:42) speaking loudly at the same time (outcry, shout, clamor).

**And some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly** - The **scribes** as the "copyists" and teachers were supposed to be the "experts in the law" and as Pharisees they believed in the resurrection. **Argue heatedly** (protest strongly, violently or vehemently, contend sharply) in the [imperfect tense](#) picture the scribes "fighting it out" verbally, again and again. As A T Robertson quips "It was a lively scrap!"

**Scribes** (1122)([grammateus](#) from [grapho](#) = to write) was one skilled in Jewish law and theology scribe, expert, scholar (Mt 2.4). See also [Who were the scribes?](#)

**Argue heatedly** (only here in NT)(1264)([diamachomai](#) from [dia](#) = thoroughly + [machomai](#) = to war, quarrel, intense and bitter) means to contend sharply (fight with words), protest strongly, argue vehemently. **Louw-Nida** - "to fight or contend with, involving severity and thoroughness - 'to protest strongly, to contend with.'"

**Saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man** - They affirm Paul's innocence. The verb **find** ([heurisko](#)) means to find after searching and thus to discover. In other words they found **nothing wrong**, where **wrong** is [kakos](#) which basically denotes a lack something and then comes to mean that which is bad or not as it ought to be. Of course, this is appears to be somewhat of an exaggeration for (as best one can determine from Luke's account) the Council had not actually interrogated Paul. The Pharisees based their verdict of "not guilty" on the fact that Paul believed in the resurrection from the dead! Of course that was the same belief for which the Sadducees wanted to condemn Paul!

**Suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?** - While not willing to admit that Jesus appeared to Paul, they did not exclude the possibility that a spirit of an angel may have appeared to him and spoken to him.

**POSB** - Religious men of politics (Sadducees) can be tragically deceived about the truth of God and the spiritual world. Men seek power at the expense of their soul's salvation. Religionists, even strict religionists who hold to Scripture, can be deceived and distort the truth for the sake of their own customs and traditions, position and livelihood. (The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Acts)

**Jack Arnold** - Just these few simple words about resurrection triggered a tumultuous argument between the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Pharisees would not admit that Paul saw the resurrected Christ but they attributed his experience to a supernatural event in which a spirit or an angel appeared to him. Note again God's providential care for Paul. Just a few words were used by God to cause a fight which in turn divided the Sanhedrin which just a few minutes before was solidly against the Apostle Paul. God just laughs at the plans and purposes of puny men and uses the most simple things to bring about His purposes. "The wicked plots against the righteous, and gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him; for He sees his day coming" (Psalm 37:12, 13). God uses the smallest, insignificant things to accomplish His purposes. Esther and the Jews were saved in the Book of Esther because the King had insomnia. Because he couldn't sleep, he called for the records and found that nothing had been done for Mordecai. Out of royal insomnia arose the deliverance of the Jewish people. Moses' tears as a baby awakened sympathy in Pharaoh's daughter and the Jewish nation was preserved and led out of the land of Egypt.

**Ray Stedman** - I do not think that this attempt to divert the subject was a deliberate trick by the apostle. It was not some cunning stratagem that he employed to get himself off the hook by dividing the assembly. He didn't premeditate it or know what the results would be. He simply realized that he was in deeper than he intended and saw that his cause was lost. So, hoping for some support by the Pharisees, he cried out this way, identifying himself with them. They were the party which represented at least some adherence to the letter and teaching of the Law. The Sadducees were what today we would call modernists, liberals. They denied the supernatural. They refused to recognize the existence of angels or spirits, and certainly not the resurrection from the dead, while the Pharisees were more fundamental in their understanding, recognizing that these things were realities. So they were ready to defend Paul on the ground that, in his conversion, it may have been that a spirit spoke to him, or an angel. They were not ready to acknowledge that it was indeed the Lord Jesus, but they were at least willing to take his part and contend that perhaps something supernatural had occurred. Paul is simply trying his best, using his wits to get out of this circumstance as best he can. But when the flesh is in control, things always work out wrongly. We try to take advantage of the situation as we see it. But we always get deeper and deeper into trouble. Paul succeeds only in polarizing the council so that his hopes for a testimony before the leaders of the nation fly out the window. He finds himself in the midst of another screaming squabble of Jews. They are yelling theological arguments at one another and threatening to tear Paul apart as they literally pull and tug at him like a bone of contention between these two quarreling parties. ([Love that Never Let's Go](#))

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**Chuck Smith** - PAUL'S DAY OF DEFEAT. He had a burning desire to preach Christ in Jerusalem. Soon after his conversion he came to Jerusalem, and the Lord told him to get out, for they would not receive his testimony.. Paul argued with the Lord. If you ever find yourself arguing with the Lord, you're wrong. Have you ever thought the Lord was making a mistake? His great moment had finally come. He stood on the steps of the Antonia fortress. The crowd listened intently as he recounted his conversion. They, however, did not let him finish his message, but began to riot. He had finally appeared before the Sanhedrin. Which also ended with a near riot. He started off bad, and things just got worse. He began saying, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." At this point, the High Priest ordered the fellow standing by Paul to hit him in the mouth. Paul said to him, "God will hit you, you whitewashed wall." Paul then cried, "I am a Pharisee, and of the hope of the resurrection I am called in question." **Some accuse Paul of cleverly dividing his foes. Perhaps so. I feel he wanted to preach the resurrection of Jesus to them.** He had to be taken into protective custody once again. Paul's lifelong desire and dream ended in total disaster.

PAUL'S NIGHT OF DISCOURAGEMENT. Trip to Jerusalem seemed total waste. His reception by church less than enthusiastic. No mention of any thanks for the gift he brought. When Peter was in prison, the church prayed (no prayer meetings with Paul...). The church through compromise had learned to live comfortably with the world, Peaceful coexistence. They begged Paul not to disturb this. They called on him to compromise also. His reception by the Jews was even worse. He no doubt was re-living his blunders. Why did I mention Gentiles to the crowd? Why did I lose my cool and call the High Priest - White-washed wall? Many people sink in the cess pool of the question *WHY?* Many spend weary nights trying to re-live the day. If I had only said, that if and why.

PAUL'S NIGHT OF VICTORY. Suddenly in that prison, Jesus was standing by him. First words, "Be of good cheer." Same Greek phrase translated, "of good courage." Signified he was discouraged or despondent. How quickly the awareness of the presence of Jesus can dispel our fears, sorrows. Jesus had no words of condemnation. He didn't say, "Paul, why did you blow it?" Paul was being harder on himself than the Lord. This is often the case. We are condemning ourselves. "Who is he that condemneth?" We often imagine the Lord condemning us. He commended him, "As you have testified of me in Jerusalem." Matters not that they rejected. Matters not that they rioted. He sets before him a new commission, "So must you also bear witness in Rome". Desire of heart to be fulfilled, Acts 19:21.. Matters not that 40 men have vowed to kill you.

**Acts 23:10 And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.**

KJV Acts 23:10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing 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.

NET Acts 23:10 When the argument became so great the commanding officer feared that they would tear Paul to pieces, he ordered the detachment to go down, take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.

GNT Acts 23:10 Πολλ ς δ γινομ νης στ σεως φοβηθε ς χιλ αρχος μ διασπασθ Πα λος π α τ ν κ λευσην τ στρ τευμα καταβ ν ρπ σαι α τ ν κ μ σου α τ ν γειν τε ε ς τ ν παρεμβολ ν.

NLT Acts 23:10 As the conflict grew more violent, the commander was afraid they would tear Paul apart. So he ordered his soldiers to go and rescue him by force and take him back to the fortress.

KJV Acts 23:10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing 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.

ESV Acts 23:10 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.

CSB Acts 23:10 When the dispute became violent, the commander feared that Paul might be torn apart by them and ordered the troops to go down, rescue him from them, and bring him into the barracks.

NIV Acts 23:10 The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.

NAB Acts 23:10 The dispute was so serious that the commander, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, ordered his troops to go down and rescue him from their midst and take him into the compound.

NKJ Acts 23:10 Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks.

NJB Acts 23:10 Feeling was running high, and the tribune, afraid that they would tear Paul to pieces, ordered his troops to go down and haul him out and bring him into the fortress.

GWN Acts 23:10 The quarrel was becoming violent, and the officer was afraid that they would tear Paul to pieces. So the officer ordered his soldiers to drag Paul back to the barracks.

NRS Acts 23:10 When the dissension became violent, the tribune, fearing that they would tear Paul to pieces, ordered the soldiers to go down, take him by force, and bring him into the barracks.

YLT Acts 23:10 and a great dissension having come, the chief captain having been afraid lest Paul may be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiery, having gone down, to take him by force out of the midst of them, and to bring him to the castle.

- **the commander was afraid** Acts 23:27; 19:28-31; 21:30-36; Ps 7:2; 50:22; Micah 3:3; James 1:19; 3:14-18; James 4:1,2
- **ordered the troops to go down and take him away** Acts 22:24
- [Video of Paul before the Sanhedrin](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **PROVIDENTIAL INTERVENTION BY PAGAN COMMANDER**

**And as a great dissension was developing** - Literally, "dissension becoming much." For **dissension** see [stasis](#) above. Things were going from bad to worse fast and on the verge of becoming physically violent.



**The commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them** - This is amazing! These Jews are so incensed that they are seemingly [oblivious](#) to the Roman commander who had legal jurisdiction over them and who would be held responsible for any riot that might occur on his watch.

**Jack Andrews** writes "The commander was over 1000 soldiers and he knew what it was to be in dangerous situations. He knew what it was like to lead his men and do battle. He was there watching and listening to the proceedings because he had a vested interest in this trial. He was seeking to get to the bottom of all the trouble. He watched as the temper's flared, the debate escalated, the assembly divided, and dissension ensued. He watched as Paul was right in the middle of it all. Luke tells us that when it reached a danger point—it was a red alert level that the commander feared that Paul would suffer immediate physical damage. (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts - Volume 6)

**David Jeremiah** said, "Paul was like the 'wishbone' from a turkey at Thanksgiving—being pulled in two different directions by the opposing parties."

**Torn** (1288) (**diaspao** from **dia** = separation + **spao** = to draw) to pull apart or asunder, tear to pieces. Describes demon possessed man breaking chains (Mk 5:4). Figuratively of God tearing off bonds from Judah (Jer 2:20).

**Diaspao** is used only twice in the NT (Mk 5:4, Acts 23:10) but 12 times in the Septuagint - Jdg. 14:6; Jdg. 16:9; Jdg. 16:12; Job 19:10; Isa. 58:6; Jer. 2:20; Jer. 4:20; Jer. 10:20; Hos. 13:8;

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek literature **diaspaō** means to "tear apart, tear down." In one military context the word referred to an army that was scattered and in disorder. In the Septuagint **diaspaō** occurs 11 times. The lion that attacked Samson on his way to Timnah (the lion later became the object of his riddle) was "torn apart" by Samson's bare hands (Judges 14:6). It also describes the ease with which Samson broke the thongs with which Delilah had tied him (Judges 16:9). Mark, the only Gospel writer to use **diaspaō**, dramatically depicted the Gadarene demoniac's strength (an aspect which Luke and Matthew neglect). Mark stated that the demoniac had been bound with chains and fetters many times, but he "broke" them (Mark 5:4). **Diaspaō** occurs only one other time, in Acts. Because Paul had created such an uproar, the commander of the Roman troops in Jerusalem was afraid Paul would be "torn apart" by the furious crowd (NIV, "torn to pieces"). He wisely elected to place Paul under protective custody until he could be safely transported to Felix (Acts 23:10). The early Christian writer Clement harshly condemned the divisions, splits, schisms, and differences within the church which, in his words, were "tearing apart" the body of Christ (1 Clement 46:7). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**And ordered** ([keleuo](#)) **the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks**- This is the third time the puzzled Roman commander is forced to rescue Paul! One can only imagine how baffled Claudius Lysias must have been by now. Every time this little Jewish man opens his mouth, it precipitates an emotional explosion from his audience! The Roman commander convened the meeting and he put an end to the meeting!

**Troops** (4753) (**strateuma** from [strateuomai](#) = to perform military duty) refers to an army (Rev 19:14, 19), a smaller detachment (Acts 23:10, 27) or the troops (Mt 22:7; Lk 23:11; Rev 9:16) In Lk 23:11 in the plural signifying troops, guards, bodyguard.

**Liddell-Scott** - an expedition, campaign, Hdt., Att. II. an armament, army, Hdt., Att.: -also a naval armament, Soph

**Gilbrant** says **strateuma** "denotes an army, a detachment of soldiers, or a troop (Bauer). Even though the military forces represented a heathen, often oppressive, ruling nation, the New Testament Church did not view them as their enemies as did the Jews. The New Testament writers even viewed them with some admiration, often referring to them as examples of unconditional obedience (Matthew 8:5-13) and discipline (2 Timothy 2:4). They are depicted as extensions and executors of governmental authority (Acts 23:10,27). Although they were participants in the crucifixion of Jesus, they were not described in ways to imply their personal guilt; rather, they were simply servants of the state in carrying out the government's directive. At worst, they are depicted as ignorant and uncaring bystanders making sport of the tragedy, unaware of the miscarriage of justice or the sacredness of the occasion. (See Matthew 27:27ff.; Mark 15:16ff.; Luke 23:36f.; John 19:2ff.) ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Strateuma** - 7x - armies(4), army(1), soldiers(1), troops(2). Matt. 22:7; Lk. 23:11; Acts 23:10; Acts 23:27; Rev. 9:16; Rev. 19:14; Rev. 19:19

**Robertson** - The soldiers were to seize and save Paul from the midst of (ek mesou) the rabbis or preachers (in their rage to get at each other). Paul was more of a puzzle to Lysias now than ever.

**Take...by force** (726) ([harpazo](#) from **haireō** = take, in NT only in [middle voice](#) = **haireomai**= to take for oneself, to choose; akin to **airo** = to raise up) means to snatch up or way, to seize or seize upon, to steal (see comparison to [klepto](#) below), to catch away or up, to pluck, to pull. The very verb used by Paul to describe the rapture of believers (1 Th. 4:17+).

NT uses of **harpazo** - carry off(1), caught(4), snatch(2), snatched...away(1), snatches(1), snatches away(1), snatching(1), take...away...by force(1), take...by force(2).

Matt. 11:12; Matt. 12:29; Matt. 13:19; Jn. 6:15; Jn. 10:12; Jn. 10:28; Jn. 10:29; Acts 8:39; Acts 23:10; 2 Co. 12:2; 2 Co. 12:4; 1 Thess. 4:17; Jude 1:23; Rev. 12:5

**Jack Arnold** - This is the third time in two days that Paul was delivered from a murderous Jewish mob by the Roman soldiers and by Claudius Lysias in particular. God used these soldiers to carry out His plan for Paul and they had no idea they were being used by God. As far as they knew, they were acting freely, but God was behind the scene of history.

**Chuck Smith** - THIS HAD TO BE ONE OF THE DARKEST HOURS IN PAUL'S LIFE.. His life long ambition to preach the gospel to the Jews has ended in utter chaos. He did not convince his former cohorts to become believers as he had hoped and was certain that he could do. Contrariwise they are so incensed against Paul that 40 of them are taking an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. For the second time in as many days the chief captain of the Roman guard had to send troops in to rescue Paul from being torn apart by the mob. The future is very uncertain at this point. He is spending his second night incarcerated in the Antonio fortress. What will happen next is anybody's guess. He is no doubt discouraged, and depressed. He is probably feeling like a great failure. He is probably kicking himself for mentioning the fact that he was called to go to the Gentiles, for this brought an end to his opportunity to witness. He probably felt that his ministry was all washed up, he had failed miserably in his greatest goal for the ministry and that was to bring his fellow Jews to the saving knowledge of Jesus. He had such an intense desire to see the Jews saved that if it could help he would even be willing to be accursed from God.

**R. Kent Hughes** wrote, "This was one of the darkest nights of Paul's life. For years he had hoped to give fruitful witness in Jerusalem. But when he arrived, he found a compromising church full of legalistic believers who held him suspect because of his contact with Gentiles. Now his hopes of convincing the leadership of his people had gone up in smoke as well. His dreams of effective testimony to the Jews lay in ashes at his feet, and his vision for successful witness in Rome began to fade too... Paul's heart ached. He was physically, emotionally, and spiritually tired..." (Preaching the Word - Acts)

**Acts 23:11 But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."**

KJV Acts 23:11 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.

NET Acts 23:11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Have courage, for just as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

GNT Acts 23:11 Τ ὁ πῖο σ νυκτ πῖο τ ς α τ κ ρῖο ς ε πεν, Θ ρσει· ς γ ρ διεμαρτ ρω τ περ μο ε ς ερουσαλ μ, ο τω σε δε κα ε ς μην μαρτυρ σαι.

NLT Acts 23:11 That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well."

KJV Acts 23:11 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.

ESV Acts 23:11 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."

CSB Acts 23:11 The following night, the Lord stood by him and said, "Have courage! For as you have testified about Me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

NIV Acts 23:11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

NAB Acts 23:11 The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage. For just as you have borne witness to my cause in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness in Rome."

NKJ Acts 23:11 But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

NJB Acts 23:11 Next night, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'Courage! You have borne witness for me in Jerusalem, now you must do the same in Rome.'

GWN Acts 23:11 The Lord stood near Paul the next night and said to him, "Don't lose your courage! You've told the truth about me in Jerusalem. Now you must tell the truth about me in Rome."

NRS Acts 23:11 That night the Lord stood near him and said, "Keep up your courage! For just as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also in Rome."

YLT Acts 23:11 And on the following night, the Lord having stood by him, said, 'Take courage, Paul, for as thou didst fully testify the things concerning me at Jerusalem, so it behoveth thee also at Rome to testify.'

- **the Lord stood at his side** Acts 2:25; 18:9; Acts 27:23,24; Ps 46:1,2; 109:31; Isaiah 41:10,14; 43:2; Jer 15:19-21; Mt 28:20; John 14:18; 2 Cor 1:8-10
- **Take courage** Acts 27:22,25; Mt 9:2; 14:27; John 16:33
- **for as you have solemnly witnessed** Acts 19:21; 20:22; 22:18; 28:23-28; Ro 1:15,16; Phil 1:13; 2 Ti 4:17
- **so you must witness at Rome also.** Acts 28:30,31; Isaiah 46:10; John 11:8-10
- [Video of Paul before the Sanhedrin](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DIVINE VISITATION "CHEER UP PAUL!"

**But on the night immediately following** - So Paul has been kept safely in the Roman barracks and receives a divine visitation. Jesus coming at night after Paul had almost been torn limb from limb shows that God is able to come at our darkest hour.

**Stedman** gives some interesting background comments on Jesus' appearance at this time - And poor Paul! Out of friendship for him, I think Luke hides some of the painful details from us here, leaving them to our imaginations. But you can imagine how Paul must have felt. He had his chance, and he blew it! Now he sits in his cell -- utterly humiliated, dejected, defeated, deflated, disenchanted. All his dreams of testimony to the Jews are in ashes around his feet. His hopes that this was the time when his nation would turn back to God at last and recognize its Messiah, would enter that golden era of peace and prosperity when all God's desires and plans for this amazing people would be fulfilled as set forth by the prophets, are all dashed to the ground. Paul is simply utterly discouraged. Now, that is always God's hour. God waits for a man to arrive at that place. This is the way he heals us when we move forward in the self-sufficiency of the flesh. He always brings us to this place. He lets it all run its course until, broken and defeated and deflated and discouraged and dejected, we sit utterly bankrupt of any resources in ourselves. That is God's hour.....Remember how Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount. He said, "Happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven..." (Matthew 5:3). Happy are you when you arrive at utter bankruptcy, when you do not have any resources left, do not have anything to count on, when you have come to the end of yourself. You have spent it all and are ready to quit. You do not know what else to do. I have been there, have you? I have said to God, "Lord, I quit! I'm not going to be a Christian anymore. I can't make it. I've tried. I've done everything I know how, and I just can't make it. I'm going to quit." I did not realize it at the time, but the Lord was standing there saying, "Great! That's just where I wanted you to come, just what I've been waiting for. Now it's my time." That is what happens here. We have seen Paul before the council. ([Love that Never Let's Go](#))

**G Campbell Morgan** - "Bold, courageous, fearless during the day, the night of loneliness finds the strength spent, and the enemy is never slow to take advantage of that fact."

As the Lord Jesus had done for Paul before in time of need, again He appears to His bondservant Paul (Acts 18:9; 22:17-21),

Acts 18:9+ And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent;

Acts 22:17-21+ "It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, 18 and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.' 19 "And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. 20 'And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.' 21 "And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

**The Lord stood at his side** - The Lord really was present. He was really standing at Paul's side. Luke does not describe this as a trance or vision. This reminds us of Jesus' promise in Mt 28:20b "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." And so it appears that Jesus was physically present with Paul. And of course He is also always spiritually present with believers for He ever

indwells us (Col 1:27b).

**Andrews** - This reminds us that the Lord Jesus knows where we are and what we are going through! He has the power to come to where we are and stand by us.

**Guzik** - When John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, was in jail, a man visited him and said, "Friend, the Lord sent me to you, and I have been looking in half the prisons in England for you." John Bunyan replied, "I don't think the Lord sent you to me, because if He had, you would have come here first. God knows I have been here for years." God knows where you are today; even if you are hiding it from everyone else, God knows where you are. Paul was alone, but he wasn't alone; if everyone else forsook him, Jesus was enough. Better to be in jail with the Lord than to be in heaven without him. Paul had been miraculously delivered from jail cells before; but this time, the Lord met him right in the jail cell. We often demand that Jesus deliver us *out* of our circumstances, when He wants to meet us right *in* them. We sometimes think we are surrendering to Jesus when we are really only demanding an escape. God wants to meet us *in* whatever we face at the moment.

**Stood by** (2186)(**ephistemi** from **epi** = upon, by, near + **histemi** = stand) means literally to stand by, upon or over and conveys the sense of to be at hand, be present. It is generally used of any sudden unexpected appearance. **Ephistemi** can denote the arrival of supernatural messengers (Lk 2:9; Lk 24:4; Acts 12:7) or a less spectacular arrival (Lk 10:40; Acts 11:11).

**Chuck Smith** points out that when the Lord **stood by** Paul it was "Not to scold him. Paul, what's wrong with you, why wouldn't you have better sense than to mention your being called to take the gospel to the Gentiles. So often when we have failed, we are expecting Jesus to scold us. Not to say, "I told you so." Earlier when Paul had been to Jerusalem, the Lord had told him to get out quickly for they would not receive his testimony, and Paul argued with the Lord, for he was sure that they would listen to him. To comfort him, "Cheer up Paul." To acknowledge his work for Him. "As you have testified of Me in Jerusalem." To give him a new commission. "So must you witness of Me in Rome."

**And said, Take courage** - And notice there was no rebuke, but encouragement. Jesus does not waste words and if He said "Take courage" that means Paul was clearly discouraged. Paul is anything but "of good cheer" at this point. He is very likely feeling defeated and discouraged, going over in his mind the awful sense of failure at missing his chance to preach the gospel before the religious leaders.

**THOUGHT** - The Lord knows when to act in behalf of his children who are undergoing severe trials. While He will not appear at our side today, His Word and His Spirit (paraclete = one called alongside) are actually within us to comfort us and encourage us! One is reminded of God's faithfulness in Paul's declaration that "No temptation (OR TRIAL) has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful (TRUSTWORTHY), (HERE IS THE COMFORTING PROMISE) Who will not allow you to be tempted (TESTED) beyond what you are able (HAVE THE INHERENT POWER/ABILITY TO ENDURE), but with the temptation (TEST/TRIAL) will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it (THE TRIAL IS STILL PRESENT BUT THE SUPERNATURAL POWER TO BEAR UP UNDER IT IS PROVIDED BY THE SPIRIT)." (1Cor 10:13).

**Robertson** - Paul never needed Jesus more than now. On a previous occasion the whole church prayed for Peter's release (Acts 12:5), but Paul clearly had no such grip on the church as that, though he had been kindly welcomed (Acts 21:18). In every crisis Jesus appears to him (cf. Acts 18:9). It looked dark for Paul till Jesus spoke. Once before in Jerusalem Jesus spoke words of cheer (Acts 22:18). Then he was told to leave Jerusalem. Now he is to have "cheer" or "courage" (*tharsei*). Jesus used this very word to others (Matthew 9:2, 22; Mark 10:49). It is a brave word.

**Take courage** (2293)(**tharseo** from **tharsos** = boldness, courage) means to have courage. Be of good courage, be of good cheer or be unafraid. The idea is that the recipient of this command is to have confidence and firmness of purpose in the face of danger or testing. **BDAG** = "to be firm or resolute in the face of danger or adverse circumstances, be enheartened." All 7 NT uses are in the **imperative mood** as a command for the distressed to be encouraged. Here in Acts 23:11 it is in the **present imperative** which calls for this to be one's lifestyle, to continually be encouraged. Now try that by relying on your own "inner" strength! You need "external" strength. In short you need to rely on the enabling power of the Spirit to energize encouragement when you are discouraged. ([See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#)). And since it is a command, the implication is we can choose to obey or disobey it. As Cole says "We disobey it when we stubbornly refuse the help that He sends us through the promises of His Word or through a fellow believer who tries to encourage us. We obey it when we say, "Thank You, Lord, for Your faithful love," and trust His Word. Thus the main way that the Lord encourages us is with His presence in our difficult circumstances."

**Gary Hill** adds that *tharseo* "refers to God bolstering the believer, empowering them with a bold inner-attitude ("of good courage"). Inner bolstering comes from the Lord infusing strength by His inworking of faith. This unflinching, bold courage lives out inner confidence which is produced by the Holy Spirit....(believers) know all physical circumstances of life are under His control (Jn 1:3)

which produces an unconquerable sense of "inner triumph." (Discovery Bible)

**Gilbrant** writes "This imperative was used by Jesus in both Matthew 14:27 and Mark 6:50 to encourage His disciples when they saw Him walking on the water. Implicit in the imperative is the idea that fear can be replaced with trust." ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

Below are all seven NT uses, all commands.

Matthew 9:2 And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "**Take courage**, son; your sins are forgiven."

Matthew 9:22 But Jesus turning and seeing her said, "Daughter, **take courage**; your faith has made you well." At once the woman was made well.

Matthew 14:27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "**Take courage**, it is I; do not be afraid."

Mark 6:50 for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, "**Take courage**; it is I, do not be afraid."

Mark 10:49 And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here." So they \*called the blind man, saying to him, **Take courage**, stand up! He is calling for you."

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but **take courage**; I have overcome the world."

Acts 23:11 But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "**Take courage**; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."

**Tharseo** in the **Septuagint** -

Gen. 35:17; Exod. 14:13; Exod. 20:20; 1 Ki. 17:13; Est. 5:1; Prov. 1:21; Prov. 31:11; Joel 2:21; Joel 2:22; Zeph. 3:16; Hag. 2:5; Zech. 8:13; Zech. 8:15;

**Related Resource:**

- [G Campbell Morgan's sermon - Christ's Call to Courage](#) - based on Matthew 9:2, 22, 14:27, John 16:33, Acts 23:11

**Mark Twain** was not a believer but his words do resonate with Jesus' charge to Paul to be confident, encouraged, unafraid at the events that are coming -

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do, than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." (ED: He gets a bit mystical at the ending, especially for a man whose destiny would be eternal punishment!)

**F F Bruce** - "This assurance meant much to Paul during the delays and anxieties of the next two years, and goes far to account for the calm and dignified bearing which from now on marks him out as a master of events rather than their victim."

One thinks of the quote by **Martin Luther** at his trial at the Diet of Worms, (April 18, 1521) "Here I stand; *I can do no other*. **God help me**. Amen!"

**Jesus'** promise to Paul recalls God's precious promise in Isaiah 43:2

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you.

**Swindoll** comments in colorful terms - "With a cool breeze of grace, Jesus blew away the stagnant memories of Paul's failure. Only the Grace of God can carve a roadway of peace through a person's wilderness of guilt, & a course river through a desert of despair!"

**Steven Cole** - The Lord did not condemn Paul for feeling discouraged, but neither did He let him stay there. He understands our feelings, because He is fully human. As Hebrews 2:16+ states, "For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, he is able to come to the aid (see [boetheo](#)) of those who are (present tense - continually being) tempted (TESTED)." So He fully understands how we feel, but He wants us to learn to deal with our feelings in a godly manner. You've probably heard the expression, "Feelings aren't right or wrong; feelings just are." There is both truth and error in that statement. The truth of it is, we shouldn't deny how we feel in an attempt to look more spiritual. Perhaps I'm feeling angry, but I know that my anger would be sinful, and so I say (with clenched teeth), "I'm not angry!" But it's obvious to everyone else that I'm steaming mad! We need honestly to

own up to how we feel. But the error in the statement is the implication that feelings are morally neutral, and that we're not responsible for them and we can't do anything about them. The Bible is clear that many of our feelings are sinful and need to be confronted and put aside. Anger is usually sinful. Sometimes, depression is sinful, when it stems from self-pity or from not trusting God. Anxiety is sinful, even when we're in the midst of a storm at sea and are afraid that we're about to die! Jesus rebuked the disciples in that situation for their lack of faith (Mark 8:35-41)! Bitterness is always sinful, no matter how badly we've been hurt. So once we've admitted how we feel, we need to process our feelings biblically. That's the fourth lesson: The Lord gives us a gracious command to encourage us in our difficult circumstances. (See full sermon [Acts 23:11 The Lord Who Encourages](#))

**David Guzik** - The words **be of good cheer** tell us that the night brought with it an emotional and perhaps spiritual darkness upon Paul. Jesus was there to **cheer** His faithful servant after he had spent himself for Jesus' sake. i. Jesus would not have said **be of good cheer** unless Paul *needed* to hear those words. Paul knew his situation was bad, but he didn't know the half of it! The next day, forty Jewish assassins would gather together and vow to go on a hunger strike until they murdered Paul. Paul didn't know this would happen, but Jesus did. Yet He still could say to Paul, **be of good cheer**. ii. You might think that things are bad right now, but you may not even know the half of it. But Jesus knows, and he still says to you, **be of good cheer**. Why? Not because everything is fine; but because God is still on His throne, and He still holds to His promise that *all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose* (Romans 8:28). iii. Anyone can **be of good cheer** when everything is great; but the Christian can **be of good cheer** when everything is rotten, knowing that God is mighty and wonderful no matter what the crisis of the moment. ([Sermon](#))

**Jack Arnold** - For Paul, things had turned from bad to worse in Jerusalem. He was a Roman prisoner, in Roman barracks and under Roman guard. Because Christ had to encourage Paul, we assume he was quite discouraged, downcast and drooping in spirits. All of his dreams of going to Rome were, in his mind, dashed on the rocks, and it appeared that he would end up his brilliant career in a Roman cell. To say the least, he was dejected, defeated, deflated and disenchanting. He felt abandoned by Christians, for none seemed to support him in Jerusalem, and abandoned by God. However, man's extremity is God's opportunity. God often brings a Christian to the place of helplessness and discouragement only to lift him to higher levels of commitment and service. When a Christian feels absolutely bankrupt of any strength to go on, that is God's hour to step in because a man at that point is totally open to Christ and ready for help of any kind from Christ. Paul probably said to himself, "I quit! I'm tired of suffering! I don't want to be a minister of the gospel any more! I don't even want to be a Christian!" Right at that point, God was going to give Paul a new surge of power to do even a greater ministry, even though Paul probably thought that his ministry was all washed up.

**For as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem** - Notice how the Lord encourages His servants with His praise of their past service. Jesus endorses Paul's previous work and his decision to go to Jerusalem. And notice that Jesus' commendation is in spite of the fact that Paul had not fully preached the Gospel. It matters not that we please men but please Him. The fact that Paul mentioned the hope of the resurrection was enough of the Gospel to satisfy the Master! Did Paul give an "altar call"? Of course not, but he gave enough truth that anyone being drawn by the Spirit would do further examination.

**THOUGHT** - All too often, we judge our service for the Lord by the results that we can measure or see. How many showed up at the meeting? How many made decisions for Christ? How many gave us positive feedback about what we did? If we consistently receive negative feedback or no visible results, we probably should evaluate whether our manner or methods are somehow wrong. But in some cases, such as with Jeremiah, we may faithfully serve the Lord for many years with many negative and few positive responses. The main criteria for evaluating our work for the Lord are: Was I faithful to God's Word? And, was I relying on Him and acting in obedience to what I believed He wanted me to do? If you can answer yes, then, even if you catch criticism, you know in your heart that the Lord was pleased with your service. You offer it up to Him, and you will hear from Him, "Well done!" The Bible has many promises that the Lord commends His faithful servants. Here are two: Hebrews 6:10 says, "For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints." And, 1 Corinthians 15:58, in the context of the resurrection of the body and the Lord's return, says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." Whatever you do to serve Him, He remembers and He will reward you for it. Even if no one else appreciates what you have done, the Lord says, "Thanks for standing for My cause!" ([Steven Cole - The Lord Who Encourages](#))

Jesus is restoring Paul to usefulness and He does this in our lives also after we have failed Him! You've experienced His restoring, comforting hand haven't you? As noted some think Paul "failed," which may be so, but to reiterate he still gave a witness of Jesus and his statement **the hope and resurrection of the dead** is a foundational truth of the Gospel!

**THOUGHT** - "This encounter with the Lord Jesus must have been a wonderful moment in the apostle's experience. The Lord restored him to spiritual health, as he often must do with us. Have you ever been in this

circumstance? Have you ever disobeyed God, knowing that you shouldn't have but wanting something so badly that you've gone ahead anyway? How wonderful to have the Lord ready to restore us. I have been there too, so I know how God can patiently, tenderly deal with us and bring us back to the place of yieldedness." - [Ray Stedman](#)

**For as you have solemnly witnessed** - In other words just as Paul had witnessed for Jesus as a prisoner in Jerusalem, he would witness in the same manner (as a prisoner) in Rome.

**Solemnly witnessed** (1263)([diamarturomai](#) from [diá](#) = intensifies meaning conveying idea of "thoroughly" + [marturomai](#) = witness, bear witness) means to thoroughly bear witness (give a thorough testimony), testify earnestly or repeatedly,

**Chuck Smith** on Jesus' commendation to Paul for his witness at Jerusalem - "For as you have testified of Me in Jerusalem." Jesus acknowledged that Paul had testified of Him in Jerusalem.. We might be prone to say, "Yes but not very successfully, he stirred up the crowd to an angered frenzy on both occasions. The response to his testimony has nothing to do with the Lord's acknowledgement of Paul's testimony. **Sometimes we are discouraged because our testimony for Jesus only brings mocking and derision, we thus feel like a total failure.** We will be rewarded for our faithfulness to testify for Jesus, not for how many responded, nor how they responded to our witness. They had responded to Paul's testimony in a very negative way, yet the Lord is acknowledging his witness. Paul had written to the Corinthians, "Your labor for the Lord is not in vain." **We need to remember that we are not as commissioned salesmen.** We get paid for presenting the merchandise, not for how many units we sell. One man may witness to 100 people and they all receive Jesus as Savior.. Another may witness to 100 people and none receive Christ. When they stand before the Lord to receive their reward for their service, they will both receive the same reward. I am not responsible to bring men to Jesus Christ, just to bring Jesus Christ to men.

**So you must witness at Rome also** - Note that the Lord encourages His servants with His promise of their future service. Paul had wanted to go to Rome and Jesus affirms the desire of his heart will be fulfilled (cf Ps 37:4+) The point is that Jesus says "There is more work for you to accomplish." And dear saint if you are alive and breathing as you read this note, take courage, for there is more work for you to accomplish before it is time to go home! As Jesus said "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work." (John 9:4) As **Spurgeon** said "A divine decree ordains for you greater and more trying service than as yet you have seen. A future awaits you, and no power on the earth or under the earth can rob you of it; therefore be of good cheer."

**Cole** - The Lord doesn't bother to tell Paul of the impending plot to kill him or of the two years that he will sit in custody in Caesarea. He doesn't tell him of the shipwreck in the Mediterranean Sea or of the fact that he will go to Rome as a prisoner. But He does tell Paul that he will bear witness at Rome

**Must** (1163)([dei](#) from [deo](#) = to bind or tie objects together, put in prison and also root of [doulos](#), bond-servant) refers to what is not optional but needful (binding) out of intrinsic necessity or inevitability. **Robertson** comments on Jesus' use of "**must**" - "That is the needed word and on this Paul leans. His hopes (Acts 19:21) of going to Rome will not be in vain. He can bide Christ's time now. And Jesus has approved his witness in Jerusalem." The Lord uses the same word again through the angel who appeared to Paul in the storm just before the shipwreck and said, "Do not be afraid, Paul; you **must** stand before Caesar" (Acts 27:24). When God says, "you **must**," you know that it's a done deal. It's going to happen. As someone has said, "You are immortal until your work for the Lord is done."

All the uses of [dei](#) in Acts -

Acts 1:16; Acts 1:21; Acts 3:21; Acts 4:12; Acts 5:29; Acts 9:6; Acts 9:16; Acts 14:22; Acts 15:5; Acts 16:30;  
Acts 17:3; Acts 19:21; Acts 20:35; Acts 23:11; Acts 24:19; Acts 25:10; Acts 25:24; Acts 26:9; Acts 27:21; Acts  
27:24; Acts 27:26;

**R. Kent Hughes** said, "God's servants are immortal until their work is done. No servant of God dies a premature death." (Preaching the Word) (ED: cf the two witnesses in Rev 11:7+ "When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them." Notice the Beast was not allowed to kill them UNTIL they had FINISHED their testimony!)

**Brian Bell** applies this passage to believers - Where has he used you to testify in the past, & most importantly where is He saying to go now? (don't bask in yesterdays glory!)

**Chuck Smith** - In effect Jesus is saying your ministry is not over, you still have to take the gospel to Rome. Earlier Paul had expressed a desire to go to Rome. Before he had ever begun this ill fated trip to Jerusalem he had announced his intentions to visit the churches in Macedonia and Achaia. then he said, "And I must also see Rome." Jesus is confirming here that Paul will indeed see Rome, and there bear witness of Him. It will yet be more than two years before Paul will get to Rome, the Lord often begins to plant

his will upon our hearts long before it is His perfect timing to bring it about. Having made known to Paul the fact that he is to be a witness in Rome, no matter how dark the days may appear to be, Paul can still be certain that he will make it to Rome, and there be a witness. His journey to Rome was under extremely dire circumstances, he was taken there as a prisoner. The captain on the ship upon which he was traveling made a very foolish mistake to try to set sail in the late fall and beat the winter storms. They were however caught in a very severe storm, for fourteen days then did not see the sun and were driven by the winds and tides. They finally had all despaired of their lives. It was then that Paul stood up and said to the passengers and crew, "Be of good cheer, for there will be no loss of life, only the ship will be destroyed. For last night the angel of God stood by me, whose I am and who I serve, and he told me I must see Caesar, therefore be of good cheer for I believe God." Many have been the times when a person has been led to believe that his ministry is over then God comes along and recommissions him again. Elijah. Peter after his denial of Jesus probably felt that Jesus would never trust him again.

**Jack Arnold** - Christ appeared to Paul and said, "Cheer up, Paul, you are going to witness for me in Rome just as I promised you." Christ stood by Paul and gave him further revelation and encouragement. What did Paul learn here? He learned that God was sovereign and as long as he was breathing God had a purpose for his life. He learned that God keeps His promises for He told Paul he was to witness before kings. He learned something of the providential presence of the overruling Lord. Paul learned what John Wesley learned when he said, "I'm immortal until my work is done!" I know from personal experience that God often uses crisis to accomplish His providential purposes. I was a senior in college and had a girlfriend who dumped me. I wanted to marry that girl and when this happened I thought the world was coming to an end. She lived in Texas and I was in California. I flew to Texas to see her and she would not talk to me. God had sovereignly hardened her heart because I was not to marry her. When in Texas, I visited her parents. Her mother introduced me to an older Christian woman, Mrs. Stonum, from whom I rented a room that next summer. Mrs. Stonum introduced me to her close friend, Mrs. McManus, who was a millionaire. Mrs. McManus was used by God to put me all the way through seminary. Furthermore, it was because I was dumped by that girl that I met my wife, Carol. What seemed at the moment to be a tragedy was used by God to bring me great blessing.

**Guzik** - Paul really *wanted* to go on to Rome (Acts 19:21 and Romans 1:9-12). Sometimes we think that just because we *want* something a lot, it couldn't be God's will for us. But God often gives us the desires of our hearts (Psalm 37:4).

The *timing* of this promise was especially precious. It didn't look like Paul would get out of Jerusalem alive; much less make it to Rome. God not only knows what we need to hear; He knows *when* we need to hear it. iii. Paul faced his enemies the next day with a smile, knowing that they were powerless against him, *because God had more for him to do!*

**Steven Cole** - The Lord didn't need to send out a team of angels to find out where Paul was. The prison cell and the guards didn't hinder the Lord from finding Paul. He knew exactly where His servant was and what he needed at that moment. And even though Paul didn't yet know it, and the Lord didn't tell Paul about it in advance, the Lord knew of the plot that the Jews were forming against Paul, not to eat or drink until they had killed him. The Lord knows all of our difficult circumstances, and the enemy can only go as far as the Lord permits, and no farther. As Isaiah 54:17 proclaims, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their vindication is from Me," declares the Lord." **You may be in a prison of difficult circumstances**—a physical illness, a financial crisis, the heartache of a loved one who has no place for God in his life—where you feel that no one knows what you're going through. Whatever your circumstances, and even if no other human being knows, Jesus knows and He cares for you. The Lord stood at Paul's side! Most likely, none of us will ever see a physical manifestation of Jesus until either He comes again or we stand before Him at death. Such visible appearances are extremely rare (1 Pet. 1:8), and we should not count on them. **But the Lord is present with us spiritually**, and to say that is not to cop out. After giving the Great Commission, Jesus promised, "And, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Or, as Hebrews 13:5-6 promises, after exhorting us to have our way of life be free from the love of money, "for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,' so that we confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?'" **When we are in the fiery furnace**, the Lord Himself stands with us, if not physically as He did with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (Da 3:19-27), very much spiritually, where you can sense His presence. Sometimes He manifests Himself in a special way through His Word. Sometimes it comes through a word of encouragement from another believer. I have experienced both, and they have been precious times, in spite of the difficulties. In my message on Acts 18:9-10, I shared with you how in my ministry in California, I was going through the most difficult time of criticism that I had ever experienced. I had changed my view from being in favor of "Christian" psychology to being against it, and that change resulted in a barrage of angry letters attacking me and calling for my resignation. One night, as I was sitting on the edge of the bed feeling discouraged, the reference "Acts 18:9-10" popped into my mind. I had not been reading in Acts and so I don't know how that verse came to my mind, except that the Lord put it there. I grabbed the Bible beside my bed, opened to those verses, and read how the Lord appeared to Paul in Corinth. He said, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city." I was flooded with the sense of the Lord's presence and His confirmation of the direction of my ministry. I also began to detect a pattern during that time. It took me a while to notice, but once I began to notice, it was very consistent. Every time that I received a letter attacking me, often in the same day's mail, or at least within a day or two, I would receive an encouraging letter. It was the Lord saying to me, "Take courage! I am with you. Just keep on



being faithful to My Word.” As many of you know, shortly after I began in the ministry here, a severe controversy developed between four of our former elders and me. It was a very distressing time. I think it’s fair to say that they were trying to force me out of the church. Many of you sent me encouraging notes, expressing your support for my ministry, which meant much to me. But the note that meant the most came from our then 13-year-old daughter, Joy. She wrote, *Mom & Dad, I just want you to know that I really appreciate you even though some other people don’t! Don’t listen to them. They don’t know what they’re talking about! Dad, I’m really glad you only preach the truth and don’t compromise what the Bible says. Your sermons have helped me lots! A lot of other people have said the same. Just hang in there and both of you keep up the good work! Look up these verses: they’ve been an encouragement to me: Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 8:28. I love you lots! Love always, Joy.* Whatever you’re going through, if you’re a child of God, He is there with you. He will show you His presence through His Word and through the encouraging words of other believers. Lean on His promise never to desert or forsake you! He knows all of our difficult circumstances and He is there with us in them. ([Steven Cole - The Lord Who Encourages](#))

**Cole’s conclusion - G. Campbell Morgan** (in [Christ’s Call to Courage](#)) asks the question, “How are we to obey Him?” How can we take courage when we feel fearful or discouraged? He concludes that the only way is to get a clear vision of the Lord Himself. It is to see Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who endured such hostility of sinners against Himself (Heb. 12:2-3). He observes, “All our fear and all our panic result from a dimmed vision of the Lord, a dimmed consciousness of Christ” (p. 19). A few paragraphs later he states, “There is no refuge for the soul of man other than the Lord Christ” (p. 20). If you’re discouraged about your present difficult circumstances, or feeling down about past mistakes you have made, or anxious about the future, the Lord wants you to take courage. He is with you in your trials, He commends you for your past service, and He promises to use you again in His service as you continue to walk with Him. And as the Lord encourages you, seek to be His channel of encouragement to others. Remember George Herbert’s words, “Good words are worth much, and cost little.” If you encourage others, you are acting like the Lord Jesus. ([Steven Cole - The Lord Who Encourages](#))

**Illustration** - Just after WWII, American soldiers found a little cellar where Jews had hid out. Written on the wall one had written, “I believe in the sun, even when it does not shine. - I believe in love, even when it is not shown. - And I believe in God even when I cannot see Him work.” Trust this: God is present, and at work thru all your circumstances, just when you need Him the most! (Brian Bell)

**Illustration** - Ancient historians record that horse traders once brought a beautiful black horse to the court of Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. The horse was as first so vicious, plunging and kicking at everyone who came near, that the king’s horseman was about to reject him. Alexander the Great stepped forward and declared that the horse was frightened by its shadow. Alexander proceeded to turn the animal’s head toward the sun, then leaped on the horse’s back and galloped back and forth before the king. You and I can become frightened by the shadow of persecution, pain, and problems. We can be overcome by isolation and intimidation. We need to look to the Son of God and be encouraged and uplifted knowing that He is with us and He will never leave us nor forsake us! The Lord came to where Paul was and stood by him. It doesn’t get any better than this! (Jack Andrews)

**Acts 23:12 When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.**

KJV Acts 23:12 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.

NET Acts 23:12 When morning came, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul.

GNT Acts 23:12 Γενου νης δ μ ρας ποι σαντες συστροφ ν ο ουδα οι νεθεμ πισαν αυτο ς λ γοντες μ τε φαγε ν μ τε πιε ν ως ο ποκτη νωσι ν τ ν Πα λον.

NLT Acts 23:12 The next morning a group of Jews got together and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

KJV Acts 23:12 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.

ESV Acts 23:12 When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

CSB Acts 23:12 When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under a curse: neither to eat nor to drink until they had killed Paul.

NIV Acts 23:12 The next morning the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

NAB Acts 23:12 When day came, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

NKJ Acts 23:12 And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

NJB Acts 23:12 When it was day, the Jews held a secret meeting at which they made a vow not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

GWN Acts 23:12 In the morning the Jews formed a conspiracy. They asked God to curse them if they ate or drank anything before they had killed Paul.

NRS Acts 23:12 In the morning the Jews joined in a conspiracy and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.

YLT Acts 23:12 And day having come, certain of the Jews having made a concourse, did anathematize themselves, saying neither to eat nor to drink till they may kill Paul;

- **the Jews formed a conspiracy** Acts 23:21,30; 25:3; Ps 2:1-3; 64:2-6; Isaiah 8:9,10; Jer 11:19; Mt 26:4
- **bound themselves** 1 Kings 19:2; 2 Kings 6:31; Mt 27:25; Mark 6:23-26
- **under an oath** Lev 27:29; Joshua 6:26; 7:1,15; Nehemiah 10:29; Mt 26:74; \*Gr.; 1 Cor 16:22; Galatians 3:13
- **that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.** Such execrable vows as these were not unusual among the Jews, who, from their perverted traditions, challenged to themselves a right of punishing without any legal process, those whom they considered transgressors of the law; and in some cases, as in the case of one who had forsaken the law of Moses, they thought they were justified in killing them. They therefore made no scruple of acquainting the chief priests and elders with their conspiracy against the life of Paul, and applying for their connivance and support; who, being chiefly of the sect of the Sadducees, and the apostle's bitterest enemies, were so far from blaming them for it, that they gladly aided and abetted them in this mode of dispatching him, and on its failure they soon afterwards determined upon making a similar attempt. (ch. 25:2, 3.) If these were, in their bad way, conscientious men, they were under no necessity of perishing for hunger, when the providence of God had hindered them from accomplishing their vow; for their vows of abstinence from eating and drinking were as easy to loose as to bind, any of their wise men or Rabbis having power to absolve them, as Dr. Lightfoot has shown from the Talmud. 1 Sa 14:24,27,28,40-44; Ps 31:13
- [Video of Plot to Kill Paul](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **FORTY ANGRY JEWS ON A "HUNGER STRIKE!"**

**John G. Butler** wrote, "After the comfort for Paul comes the conspiracy against Paul. After the solace from the Savior comes the storm from Satan. After the promise given Paul comes the persecution against Paul. After the night with the presence of the Master comes the day with the presence of the murderers. This is not unusual, but the usual. When God blesses, we can expect Satan to buffet."

**MacArthur** - God will deliver him—not by a supernatural miracle, but by His providential ordering of circumstances. Paul's situation closely parallels that of another man of God, David. He, too, was treated unfairly and plotted against—only to repeatedly experience God's providential deliverance....The scene is tragically reminiscent of Jesus' death. Both Jesus and Paul were Jews, preachers of the gospel to their people, and guilty of no crime. Yet both were plotted against, both stood before a confused Sanhedrin, and both were prisoners in Fort Antonia. Paul truly shared in "the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. 3:10; cf. Gal. 6:17). (Ibid)

**When it was day** - "At night the Lord met with His servant Paul to encourage him—at day the devil met with his servants about Paul to execute him!" (Andrews)

**The Jews (*loudaios*) formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath** (cf. 1 Sa 14:44; 2 Sa 3:35; 19:13; 1 Ki 2:23; 2 Ki 6:31), **saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul** - Their willingness to take a serious oath shows the lengths to which the Jews were willing to go to eradicate Paul. Their hatred of Paul was bitter and abiding. Sadly their conspiracy was a picture of men deceiving themselves (probably urged on by the Deceiver himself).

In 2 Cor 4:4 Paul described men like these plotters

"in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

These foolish Jews actually thought they would be pleasing God by getting rid of Paul. The words of Paul to Titus would describe these men:

They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed. (Titus 1:16<sup>±</sup>)

As MacArthur says "The plotters were dupes of Satan, willing to be used to stifle the saving gospel by killing the most effective Christian preacher." (Ibid)

**Andrews** - They came together for a cause—they had a purpose for their meeting—they were united in their cause! They were dead serious about their endeavor—but they were also dead wrong. Just because you are passionate about something doesn't mean that you are right! Just because you have people on your side and think the way you think does not mean your cause is right in the sight of God! They not only banded together, but they also bound themselves together with an oath!(Ibid)

**TDNT** says ""they accursed themselves," or "wished for themselves the curse of God," or "declared their lives forfeit," if they did not."

**Stedman** - This certainly underscores the hopelessness of Paul's attempt to witness to these Jews. They are not only unwilling to listen, they are intent upon killing him. So they concoct a plot by which they can get Paul away from the protection of the Roman guardhouse and down into the streets of Jerusalem on his way to the high priest's palace. There, in the narrow, tortuous alleyways of that old city, they have a band of forty men who have vowed never to eat or drink until they have overpowered his guards and put him to death. It looks as if the plot might work. ([Love that Never Lets Go](#))

**Barclay** explains that "Under certain circumstances the Jews regarded murder as justifiable. If a man was a public danger to morals and to life they regarded it as legitimate to eliminate him. So forty men put themselves under a **vow**. The vow was called a cherem. When a man took such a vow he said, "May God curse me if I fail to do this." These men vowed neither to eat nor drink, and put themselves under the ban of God, until they had assassinated Paul. Fortunately their plan was laid bare by Paul's nephew.

**Jack Arnold** entitles this next section Acts 23:12-35 "GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DELIVERANCE OF PAUL FROM A CONSPIRACY" - These Jews hated Paul so much that they bound themselves to a sacred oath to murder Paul because he was the arch apostate of Judaism in their minds. God, in His providence, even used these evil men to further His plans and purposes for the Apostle Paul. God works with evil instruments as well as good ones to bring about His plan. God is not the author of evil, but God uses evil instruments to further His own ends.

- "If a calamity (evil) occurs in a city has not the Lord done it" (Amos 3:6)?
- "The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov. 16:4).
- "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps" (Prov. 16:9).

This principle is most clearly seen in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, for it was all planned by God, yet men were totally responsible.

"For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy Servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur" (Acts 4:27, 28). ([Sermon](#))

**Conspiracy** ([4963](#)) (**sustrophe** from **sustrepho** = collect together in a bundle) means literally a twisting or binding together and then figuratively, a coalition and finally an unruly gathering. **Louw-Nida** - "disorderly mob revolt, with special implications of uproar and disturbance." **BDAG** - "(1) a tumultuous gathering of people, disorderly/seditious gathering or commotion (2) the product of a clandestine gathering, plot, conspiracy"

**Gilbrant** - The word **sustrophē** is composed of two terms, **sun**, "with," and **trophē**, "to turn." It is used throughout classical Greek writings with both literal and metaphoric meanings. **Literally**, it refers to things that are twisted together, for example, yarn, chalkstones, nerves and sinews, twisted grain in wood, etc. The term is used likewise by classical writers in reference to a flock of birds, and even to the twisting together of a knot (Liddell-Scott). **Metaphorically**, it is used to denote communication between men in the form of a conspiracy or coalition, or a disorderly gathering such as a riot, as noted in the writings of Herodotus and Polybius (Bauer). The **Septuagint** uses the term with the same diversity as classical Greek. Judges 14:8 uses the term in reference to Samson's "swarm of bees" and the honey in the carcass. In this sense the "gathering" is of physical objects. In 2 Kings 15:15 **sustrophē** is used of the "conspiracy" of Shallum when he overthrew the evil king Zachariah. Similarly it is used in David's prayer to God against those who would bring an "insurrection" against him (Psalm 64:2), and in Amaziah's accusation of "conspiracy" against

Jeroboam (Amos 7:10). In Hosea *sustrophē* is used twice. The first appearance is in 4:19 where it denotes the whirlwind (cf. the “spirit of whoredom” in 4:12), spoken of earlier, that will consume them (Wolff, *Hermeneia*, Hosea, p.92). In Hosea 13:12 Israel’s sin is “bound up”; i.e., in keeping with the legal tone of the passage, their guilt remains as though laid away in a nonreversible legal record (ibid., p.228). Only two instances of *sustrophē* are noted in the New Testament. Both are located in the Book of Acts, and both times a “conspiracy” is described. In Acts 19:40 the term is translated “concourse,” in reference to the disorderly riot of Ephesians who were upset at Paul and his fellow workers for preaching against the goddess Diana (Artemis). In Acts 23:12 the term is translated “banded (twisted) together” in reference to a group of Jews who had conspired to have Paul killed. ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Sustrophe** - Acts 19:40; Acts 23:12 and in the Septuagint = Jdg. 14:8; 2 Ki. 15:15; Ps. 64:2; Jer. 4:16; Ezek. 13:21; Hos. 4:19; Hos. 13:12; Amos 7:10;

**Bound under an oath** (332) (**anathematizo** from **anathēma** = a curse, cf use in Gal 1:8,9+) means to bind with an oath or under a curse, as if calling on God to punish if what is solemnly spoken is not true or is not accomplished. In Mk 14:71 Peter “began to curse and swear, “I do not know this man (JESUS) you are talking about!””

**Robertson** - Deissmann (*Light from the Ancient East*, p. 95) quotes several examples of the verb in an Attic cursing tablet from Megara of the first or second century A.D. This proof shows that the word, as well as *anathema* (substantive) from which the verb is derived, was employed by pagans as well as by Jews....King Saul took an “anathema” that imperilled Jonathan (1 Samuel 14:24). Perhaps the forty felt that the rabbis could find some way to absolve the curse if they failed.

**Anathematizo** - bound...under...oath(1), bound...under a curse(2), bound...under an oath(2), curse(1), under...oath(1).

Mk. 14:71; Acts 23:12; Acts 23:14; Acts 23:21 and in the Septuagint - Num. 18:14; Num. 21:2; Num. 21:3; Deut. 13:15; Deut. 20:17; Jos. 6:21; Jdg. 1:17; Jdg. 21:11; 1 Sam. 15:3; 2 Ki. 19:11; 1 Chr. 4:41; Ezr. 10:8; Da 11:44;

**Keener** - Revolutionary-minded Jews considered some assassinations pious acts; Herod the Great had once executed ten Pharisees who had formed an association by oath for the purpose of killing him. If Paul’s enemies eventually broke their oaths to kill him, Jewish law would simply require them to bring atonement offerings to the temple; thus their oath here does not mean they would literally starve. (The IVP Bible Background Commentary – New Testament)

## Acts 23:13 There were more than forty who formed this plot.

KJV Acts 23:13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

NET Acts 23:13 There were more than forty of them who formed this conspiracy.

GNT Acts 23:13 σαν ὄ πλε ους τεσσαρ κοντα ο τα την τ ν συνωμοσ αν ποιησ μενοι,

NLT Acts 23:13 There were more than forty of them in the conspiracy.

ESV Acts 23:13 There were more than forty who made this conspiracy.

CSB Acts 23:13 There were more than 40 who had formed this plot.

NIV Acts 23:13 More than forty men were involved in this plot.

NAB Acts 23:13 There were more than forty who formed this conspiracy.

NKJ Acts 23:13 Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy.

NJB Acts 23:13 More than forty of them entered this pact,

GWN Acts 23:13 More than forty men took part in this plot.

NRS Acts 23:13 There were more than forty who joined in this conspiracy.

YLT Acts 23:13 and they were more than forty who made this conspiracy by oath,

- **who formed this plot.** 2 Sa 15:12,31; John 16:2
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JEWS PLOT

## AGAINST A JEW

**There were more than forty who formed this plot** - The word for **plot** is **sunomosa** (used only here) which literally means taking an oath together in a negative sense. **Sunomosa** is the ordinary term for **conspiracy** and is used throughout Greek literature to denote a conspiracy or confederacy usually of soldiers or politicians entering into an oath together to put down a democracy or political union.

**Andrews** - Evil has a way of recruiting others to do its dirty work. The devil has a great company in the world doing his work. They were planning on secretly attacking Paul and killing him. The devil does his most effective work in secrecy. (Ibid)

**Acts 23:14 They came to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul.**

KJV Acts 23:14 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.

NET Acts 23:14 They went to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have bound ourselves with a solemn oath not to partake of anything until we have killed Paul.

GNT Acts 23:14 ο πινης προσελθ ντες το ς ρχιερει σιν κα το ς πρεσβυτ ροις ε παν, ναθ ματι νεθεματ σαμεν αυτο ς μηδεν ς γε σασθαι ως ο ποκτε νωμεν τ ν Πα λον.

NLT Acts 23:14 They went to the leading priests and elders and told them, "We have bound ourselves with an oath to eat nothing until we have killed Paul.

ESV Acts 23:14 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.

CSB Acts 23:14 These men went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have bound ourselves under a solemn curse that we won't eat anything until we have killed Paul.

NIV Acts 23:14 They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul.

NAB Acts 23:14 They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have bound ourselves by a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul.

NKJ Acts 23:14 They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul.

NJB Acts 23:14 and they went to the chief priests and elders and told them, 'We have made a solemn vow to let nothing pass our lips until we have killed Paul.

GWN Acts 23:14 They went to the chief priests and leaders of the people and said, "We've asked God to curse us if we taste any food before we've killed Paul.

NRS Acts 23:14 They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food until we have killed Paul.

YLT Acts 23:14 who having come near to the chief priests and to the elders said, 'With an anathema we did anathematize ourselves -- to taste nothing till we have killed Paul;

- Ps 52:1,2; Isaiah 3:9; Jer 6:15; 8:12; Hosea 4:9; Micah 7:3
- [Video of Plot to Kill Paul](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PLOTTERS SEEK PERMISSION

**They came to the chief priests and the elders**- These would be predominantly Sadducees who already dislike Paul's assertion of a resurrection from the dead.

**And said, "We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul.**- The band of 40 Jews

seeks approval of the religious leaders to kill Paul. This is sad when religious leaders don't immediately condemn this conspiracy, and thereby essentially agree that murder is acceptable in this setting. How far men will go when they go from the Holy God, even when they still pretend to be religious! These legalist made exceptions in their legalism when it suited them for Ex 20:13 was crystal clear stating "**You shall not murder.**" They knew that the Romans would not kill him for Paul had committed no capital crime, so they took matters into their own evil hands!

**David Jeremiah** wrote, "The fact that they would then be prosecuted by the Romans for murder didn't matter to them. They were like today's suicide bombers whose hatred runs so deep that they will lose their own life for the chance to kill one of their enemies."

**Bound under an oath** (332) see above on [anathematizo](#)

**Longenecker** on the binding nature of their **solemn oath** - That did not mean, however, that they would necessarily have to starve if they failed. The rabbis allowed four types of vows to be broken: "vows of incitement, vows of exaggeration, vows made in error, and vows that cannot be fulfilled by reason of constraint" (M *Nedarim* 3:1-3)—exclusions allowing for almost any contingency. The conspirators' plan, though violating both the letter and the spirit of Jewish law pertaining to the Sanhedrin (cf. b *Sanhedrin* 82a), was in keeping with the character of the high priest Ananias (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 9: John and Acts)

**POSB** on the murderous intent of the conspirators - They showed contempt for their bodies and souls. The law said, "Thou shalt not kill," yet they plotted to kill. Down deep they knew better, yet they plotted evil under a *religious* curse, saying they would not eat or drink until the evil was done. They disregarded the care of both their souls and bodies. How deceived the human mind, the human heart! We know better; the law of God forbids the act. Yet, we think that because we hurt or have need, God understands and will not hold us accountable. What we fail to see is this: God wants to meet our need Himself. When we go ahead and take matters into our own hands, we are failing to trust Him, failing to believe He loves and cares enough and has the power to meet our need. (The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Acts)

**Keener** - Ambushes by robbers and terrorists were common, especially at night. During these years shortly before the Jewish war with Rome, the *sicarii* ([Acts 21:38](#)) regularly assassinated Jews suspected of collaboration with the Romans, and all Palestine was uneasy; this report is thus quite believable. That aristocratic priests, who in the war of 66-70 turned out to have their own violent agendas, would cooperate in this plot is not surprising. (These priests would be some high Sadducean members of the council, not Pharisees.) (The IVP Bible Background Commentary – New Testament)

**Acts 23:15** "Now therefore, you and the Council **notify** the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case by a more thorough investigation; and we for our part are ready to slay him before he comes near the place."

KJV Acts 23:15 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.

NET Acts 23:15 So now you and the council request the commanding officer to bring him down to you, as if you were going to determine his case by conducting a more thorough inquiry. We are ready to kill him before he comes near this place."

GNT Acts 23:15 ν ν ο ν με ς μφαν σατε τ χιλι ρχ σ ν τ συνεδρ πω ς κατα γ α τ ν ε ς μ ς ς μ λλοντας δια γιν σκειν κριβ στερον τ περ α το · με ς δ πρ το γ γ σαι α τ ν τοιμο σμεν το νε λε ν α τ ν.

NLT Acts 23:15 So you and the high council should ask the commander to bring Paul back to the council again. Pretend you want to examine his case more fully. We will kill him on the way."

ESV Acts 23:15 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."

CSB Acts 23:15 So now you, along with the Sanhedrin, make a request to the commander that he bring him down to you as if you were going to investigate his case more thoroughly. However, before he gets near, we are ready to kill him."

NIV Acts 23:15 Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here."

NAB Acts 23:15 You, together with the Sanhedrin, must now make an official request to the commander to

have him bring him down to you, as though you meant to investigate his case more thoroughly. We on our part are prepared to kill him before he arrives."

NKJ Acts 23:15 "Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near."

NJB Acts 23:15 Now it is up to you and the Sanhedrin together to apply to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you meant to examine his case more closely; we, on our side, are prepared to dispose of him before he reaches you.'

GWN Acts 23:15 Here's our plan: You and the council must go to the Roman officer on the pretext that you need more information from Paul. You have to make it look as though you want to get more accurate information about him. We'll be ready to kill him before he gets to you."

NRS Acts 23:15 Now then, you and the council must notify the tribune to bring him down to you, on the pretext that you want to make a more thorough examination of his case. And we are ready to do away with him before he arrives."

YLT Acts 23:15 now, therefore, ye, signify ye to the chief captain, with the sanhedrim, that to-morrow he may bring him down unto you, as being about to know more exactly the things concerning him; and we, before his coming nigh, are ready to put him to death.'

- **notify the commander to bring him down to you** Acts 25:3; Ps 21:11; 37:32,33; Pr 1:11,12,16; 4:16; Isaiah 59:7; Ro 3:14-16
- [Video of Plot to Kill Paul](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## CRIMINALS CONNIVE WITH COUNCIL AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN

**Now therefore, you** (chief priests and the elders) **and the Council** **notify** ([emphanizo](#) - make plain, [aorist imperative](#)) **the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case by a more thorough investigation** ([akribos](#)); **and we for our part are ready** ([hetoimos](#)) **to slay** ([anaireo](#)) **him before he comes near** ([eggizo](#)) *the place*. - They concoct a plot and in so doing indict **the chief priests and the elders** as accomplices to this murder (so much for the integrity of their religious practices!). Luke does not tell us how the Sanhedrin replied but Acts 23:20 clearly implies that they concurred with the clandestine plot. Also the fact that the Jewish religious rulers did not turn the plotters in to the Romans indicates they were in agreement with the plot.

Does this conference with the Council sound familiar? Recall a similar tactic by Judas...

And he went away and discussed with the **chief priests and officers** ([strategos](#)) how he might betray Him to them. (Luke 22:4+)

**Homer Kent** -- "Evidently the conspirators knew how morally rotten their leaders were, or they would not have suggested such a scheme to them. No wonder Paul later appealed to Caesar rather than appear before the Sanhedrin again."

**Longenecker** - They pledged that they would kill him as he was brought from the Fortress of Antonia **north** of the temple to the hall of the Sanhedrin **southwest** of the temple area. (Ibid)

**Jack Arnold** - The fact that God uses evil men does not mean that men are robots. Men are always responsible for their evil actions and attitudes. God's providence governs man but it governs him in such a way that man is not robbed of the degree of liberty necessary for him to remain responsible for his own actions. God's plan includes the evil actions of men and yet in such a way that He is not responsible for the evil. Men are responsible for their evil and they are held accountable, but all this never occurs outside God's secret will. This is a very hard concept to understand, but the Bible illustrates it best of all for us from the life of Joseph. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery which was a very evil act. Years later, after God used that evil as a stepping stone to make Joseph Pharaoh's right hand man, Joseph could say, "And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive" (Gen. 50:20).

**Before he comes near** ([eggizo](#)) *the place*. - They would kill him before he actually arrived in the Council chambers. You wouldn't want blood in the Council! Hypocrites to the core, every one of them!

**Notify** ([1718](#)) ([emphanizo](#) from **en** = in, into + **phaino** = show, make visible, make conspicuous) means to make visible, to lay

something open to view (clear or plain) so all can see (Jn 14:22, cp Ex 33:13 = idea is "reveal Yourself to me", Mt 27:53, He 9:24). To provide information so as to make clear, to explain or to inform (Acts 23:22, He 11:14, Jn 14:21 Isa 3:9). To present evidence or bring charges as in a formal judicial report (Acts 24:1, 25:2, Esther 2:22)

**Determine** (1231)(**diaginosko** from **dia** = intensives meaning + **ginosko** = to know) means to decide or determine by a thorough investigation. It was a legal technical term here in Acts 23:15 for carrying out a judicial inquiry and thoroughly (prefix dia = intensive, thoroughly) examining or inquiring. Only other use is Acts 24:22 where Felix declared "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will **decide** your case."

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek **diaginōskō** was used since the time of Homer to mean "decide, determine." The Septuagint used a form of **diaginōskō** in the place of two Hebrew words, **dāmâh** and **yādha'**. God told Moses that what He had "determined" (Hebrew **dāmâh**) to do to the Canaanites would be done to the Israelites if they did not obey (Numbers 33:56). Proverbs states that the wisdom of obedience is found in the good heart, but in the heart of fools it is not discerned (Hebrew **yādha'**, Proverbs 14:33). **Diaginōskē** is used only twice in the New Testament, both times in the Book of Acts (23:15; 24:22). It means to "investigate, examine, decide, determine." Its component parts are the words **dia** (1217) and **ginōskō** (1091), "to know."

**Diaginosko** - Acts 23:15; Acts 24:22 and in the Septuagint in Num. 33:56; Deut. 2:7; Deut. 8:2; Prov. 14:33;

### Acts 23:16 But the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul.

KJV Acts 23:16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

NET Acts 23:16 But when the son of Paul's sister heard about the ambush, he came and entered the barracks and told Paul.

GNT Acts 23:16 κοσας δ υς τς δελφς Παλου τν νδραν, παραγενμενος κα εσελθν ες τν παρεμβολν πγειλεν τ Παλ.

NLT Acts 23:16 But Paul's nephew-- his sister's son-- heard of their plan and went to the fortress and told Paul.

KJV Acts 23:16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

ESV Acts 23:16 Now the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul.

CSB Acts 23:16 But the son of Paul's sister, hearing about their ambush, came and entered the barracks and reported it to Paul.

NIV Acts 23:16 But when the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul.

NAB Acts 23:16 The son of Paul's sister, however, heard about the ambush; so he went and entered the compound and reported it to Paul.

NKJ Acts 23:16 So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul.

NJB Acts 23:16 But the son of Paul's sister heard of the ambush they were laying and made his way into the fortress and told Paul,

GWN Acts 23:16 But Paul's nephew heard about the ambush. He entered the barracks and told Paul.

NRS Acts 23:16 Now the son of Paul's sister heard about the ambush; so he went and gained entrance to the barracks and told Paul.

YLT Acts 23:16 And the son of Paul's sister having heard of the lying in wait, having gone and entered into the castle, told Paul,

- **But the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush** Job 5:13; Pr 21:30; Lamentations 3:37; 1 Cor 3:19
- **he came and entered the barracks and told Paul** 2 Sa 17:17
- [Video of Plot to Kill Paul](#)



- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND PAUL'S NEPHEW

Collins English dictionary has a good definition of **providence** as "God's foreseeing protection and care of His creatures." Succinctly stated that is what Luke describes! God may be behind the scenes, but He controls the scenes He is behind.

**Jack Andrews** - No matter how hard the men tried, how much the men connived, the plans of men cannot override the providence of God. St. Augustine wrote, "Trust the past to the mercy of God, the present to His love, and the future to His providence. (Ibid)

**But** - And what a **term of contrast** this is! God just happens to have the son of Paul's sister within earshot of the discussion of the plot to kill Paul! Talk about coincidence! God is behind all "coincidences" in our life!

**The son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush** - Luke does not tell us where this young man overheard the plot, but presumably they are still in the council chambers. God makes sure that he hears the details of the plot.

**Ambush** (1747)(enedra from **en** = in + **hedra** = sitting) literally means a sitting in or on a spot and then figuratively lying in wait as in ambush. **BDAG** - "'sitting in', hence as act of concealment for surprise attack." **Louw-Nida** - "to conceal oneself or to proceed secretly, while waiting for an appropriate opportunity to attack - 'to be in an ambush, to make plans for a secret attack."

**Gilbrant** - Enedra is used in the Septuagint more often than the classical term enedra and is used in the more general sense of "fraud." In a fourth-century A.D. papyrus it means a "hindrance" or an "obstruction" (Liddell-Scott). (Ibid)

**He came and entered the barracks and told Paul**- Notice that Paul's nephew has free access to the Roman barracks, which again reflects the provision of God.

**Longenecker** - As a Roman citizen under protective custody, Paul could receive visitors—among them his nephew. So when Paul heard his warning, he asked one of the centurions to take his nephew to the commander. (Ibid)

**Jack Arnold** - We learn here that Paul had a sister and nephew in Jerusalem. Somehow this young man found out about the plot to kill Paul. God providentially used a young boy to warn Paul of the plot to kill him. God's timing was perfect, for the boy found out just in the nick of time, and did not delay or Paul would have been dead. We call this a divine coincidence but there are no coincidences in the plan of God. Notice that this detail of a young boy overhearing a conversation seems so insignificant but it was another providential move in the plan of God for Paul. When Columbus was sailing to America, a flight of birds caused him to change his course. (He was sailing for Virginia but, at this point, he was looking for land because they had been at sea a long time and his men were mutinous.) Suddenly, he saw a flight of birds to the southwest. He changed his direction to the southwest and hit the West Indies instead of Virginia. That simply determined whether this nation would be dominated by Spain or by England. Such a small thing as a flight of birds determining such a tremendous thing in history!

**Acts 23:17 Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Lead this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him."**

KJV Acts 23:17 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.

NET Acts 23:17 Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commanding officer, for he has something to report to him."

GNT Acts 23:17 προσκαλεσμενος δε Παλος να τιν καταρχον φη, τιν νεαναν τον παραγγελησεν τιν αρχον, χει γρ παραγγελατα.

NLT Acts 23:17 Paul called for one of the Roman officers and said, "Take this young man to the commander. He has something important to tell him."

ESV Acts 23:17 Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the tribune, for he has something to tell him."

CSB Acts 23:17 Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander, because he has something to report to him."

NIV Acts 23:17 Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him."

NAB Acts 23:17 Paul then called one of the centurions and requested, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to report to him."

NKJ Acts 23:17 Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him."

NJB Acts 23:17 who called one of the centurions and said, 'Take this young man to the tribune; he has something to tell him.'

GWN Acts 23:17 Then Paul called one of the sergeants and told him, "Take this young man to the officer. He has something to tell him."

NRS Acts 23:17 Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the tribune, for he has something to report to him."

YLT Acts 23:17 and Paul having called near one of the centurions, said, 'This young man lead unto the chief captain, for he hath something to tell him.'

- **Paul called one of the centurions to him and said** Acts 23:23; 22:26; Pr 22:3; Mt 8:8,9; 10:16
- [Video of Plot to Kill Paul](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Paul called one of the centurions to him and said "Lead this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him."** - Remember that Paul has the assurance from the Lord Jesus that he will eventually arrive safely at Rome. And yet that promise does not mean Paul is to do nothing. Thus he seeks to make sure the Roman commander is informed.

Notice that Paul was not so mystical that he did not accept some responsibility for his safe passage to Rome. In fact undoubtedly he must have seen the hand of the Lord in the fact that the nephew had overheard the plotter's plan. And yet he still took personal responsibility to use the information wisely.

**Brian Bell** writes that is is amazing to "watch how God pulled this all off: (1) The otherwise unknown nephew just happened to overhear the plot. (2) He somehow entered the heavily guarded barracks to tell Paul. (3) A centurion was willing to take him to the commander. (4) The busy commander listened to him right away & believed him. (5) Then the commander ordered a small army to escort Paul out of town under cover of darkness. When God makes a promise, He keeps it with remarkable style! We learn 2 important truths: The Grace of God can overshadow any guilt within us & the Power of God can overcome any plot against us! Are you wandering in a wilderness of guilt? Are you lost in a desert of despair? Find the cool springs of Gods Grace & Power! ([Sermon](#))

**Acts 23:18 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."**

KJV Acts 23:18 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.

NET Acts 23:18 So the centurion took him and brought him to the commanding officer and said, "The prisoner Paul called me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you."

GNT Acts 23:18 μ ν ο ν παραλαβ ν α τ ν γαγεν π ρ ς τ ν χιλ αρχον κα φησ ν, δ σμιος Πα λος προσκαλεσ με ς με ρ ησεν το τον τ ν νεαν σκον γαγε ν π ρ ς σ χοντ τι λαλ σα σοι.

NLT Acts 23:18 So the officer did, explaining, "Paul, the prisoner, called me over and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you."

ESV Acts 23:18 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."

CSB Acts 23:18 So he took him, brought him to the commander, and said, "The prisoner Paul called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, because he has something to tell you."

NIV Acts 23:18 So he took him to the commander. The centurion said, "Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and

asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you."

NAB Acts 23:18 So he took him and brought him to the commander and explained, "The prisoner Paul called me and asked that I bring this young man to you; he has something to say to you."

NKJ Acts 23:18 So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you."

NJB Acts 23:18 So the man took him to the tribune, and reported, 'The prisoner Paul summoned me and requested me to bring this young man to you; he has something to tell you.'

GWN Acts 23:18 The sergeant took the young man to the officer and said, "The prisoner Paul called me. He asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you."

NRS Acts 23:18 So he took him, brought him to the tribune, and said, "The prisoner Paul called me and asked me to bring this young man to you; he has something to tell you."

YLT Acts 23:18 He indeed, then, having taken him, brought him unto the chief captain, and saith, 'The prisoner Paul, having called me near, asked me this young man to bring unto thee, having something to say to thee.'

- **Paul the prisoner called me to him** Acts 16:25; 27:1; 28:17; Genesis 40:14,15; Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; Philemon 1:9
- **he has something to tell you** Luke 7:40
- [Video of Plot to Kill Paul](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S NEPHEW TAKEN TO COMMANDER

**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 Roman soldier obeys the orders (so to speak) from Paul again emphasizing that God is in control. MacArthur adds "That the centurion immediately did what Paul asked shows the respect the apostle's Roman citizenship commanded." (Ibid)

- Play Twila Paris' great song [God is in Control](#).

**Jack Andrews** - Paul was wise enough to go through the proper channels—he didn't tell the centurions what his nephew told him, but he told the centurion to take his nephew to the commander so that he could tell him personally! God was working out every detail so that His servant would go safely to Rome. He would thwart the plans of men to accomplish the plans of God! (Ibid)

**Jack Arnold** - Notice how cooperative this centurion was when Paul made this request, for God had him prepared to do so although he was acting freely. This is such a small but crucial turning point in the carrying out of God's providential will for Paul. When in Romania several years ago, Dr. Josif Ton, the leader of the Christian movement in that communist country, told an interesting story. He had been interrogated by the communists for weeks and weeks and felt he was about to break mentally under the pressure. Then suddenly they stopped all interrogation and let him go. Later he found out that an American businessman told the Romanian government that he was not going to sell his product to the Romanian government if they continued to persecute Christians in that country. Because the Romanians desperately need American technology and money so as not to be completely dominated by Russia which they hate, they immediately stopped the interrogations of Dr. Ton. A coincidence? I think not!

**Robertson on young man** - How old the young man (neanias) was we do not know, but it is the very word used of Paul in Acts 7:58 when he helped in the killing of Stephen, a young man in the twenties probably. See also Acts 20:9 of Eutychus. He is termed neaniskos in Acts 23:22.

**Young man** (3495) see note on [neaniskos](#)

**Acts 23:19 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?"**

KJV Acts 23:19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?

NET Acts 23:19 The commanding officer took him by the hand, withdrew privately, and asked, "What is it that you want to report to me?"

GNT Acts 23:19 πιλαβ μενος δ τ ς χειρ ς α το χιλ αρχος κα ναχωρ σασ κατ δ αν πιυθ νετο, Τ στιν χειρ ς παγγε λα μοι;

NLT Acts 23:19 The commander took his hand, led him aside, and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?"

ESV Acts 23:19 The tribune took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?"

CSB Acts 23:19 Then the commander took him by the hand, led him aside, and inquired privately, "What is it you have to report to me?"

NIV Acts 23:19 The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?"

NAB Acts 23:19 The commander took him by the hand, drew him aside, and asked him privately, "What is it you have to report to me?"

NKJ Acts 23:19 Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?"

NJB Acts 23:19 Then the tribune took him by the hand and drew him aside and questioned him in private, 'What is it you have to tell me?'

GWN Acts 23:19 The officer took the young man by the arm, went where they could be alone, and asked him, "What do you have to tell me?"

NRS Acts 23:19 The tribune took him by the hand, drew him aside privately, and asked, "What is it that you have to report to me?"

YLT Acts 23:19 And the chief captain having taken him by the hand, and having withdrawn by themselves, inquired, 'What is that which thou hast to tell me?'

- **The commander took him by the hand** Jer 31:32; Mark 8:23; 9:27
- **What is it that you have to report to me** Nehemiah 2:4; Esther 5:3; 7:2; 9:12; Mark 10:51
- [Video of Plot to Kill Paul](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A PRIVATE INQUIRY

**The commander took him by the hand** - This could suggest he was relatively young, but we cannot be dogmatic. Clearly he was old enough to relate a believable story.

**Howard Marshall** pointed out, "The fact that the tribune took the boy by the hand has also been the subject of scholarly sarcasm: 'Never was a tribune so amiable,' said (one commentator). But the impression we get is rather that the lad was quite young, and the tribune's action is appropriate. The ancient world would not have seen any incompatibility between his ordering Paul to be scourged and his kindly treatment of the boy."

**And stepping aside, began to inquire of him privately what is it that you have to report to me**- The Roman commander was prepared to hear this story, presumably prepared by God.

**Andrews** - He tells the commander who (the Jews), what (agreed to ask for Paul), when (tomorrow), and why (as though they were going to inquire more fully about him).(Ibid)

**Acts 23:20** 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.

KJV Acts 23:20 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.

NET Acts 23:20 He replied, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as if they were going to inquire more thoroughly about him.

GNT Acts 23:20 ε πεν δ τι Ο ουδα οι συν θεντο το ρωτ σα σε πω ς α ριον τ ν Πα λον κατα γ ς ε ς τ συν δ ριον ς μ λλον τι κριβ στερον πυνθ νεσθαι περ α το .

NLT Acts 23:20 Paul's nephew told him, "Some Jews are going to ask you to bring Paul before the high council tomorrow, pretending they want to get some more information.

ESV Acts 23:20 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.

CSB Acts 23:20 "The Jews," he said, "have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the Sanhedrin tomorrow, as though they are going to hold a somewhat more careful inquiry about him.

NIV Acts 23:20 He said: "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him.

NAB Acts 23:20 He replied, "The Jews have conspired to ask you to bring Paul down to the Sanhedrin tomorrow, as though they meant to inquire about him more thoroughly,

NKJ Acts 23:20 And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him.

NJB Acts 23:20 He replied, "The Jews have made a plan to ask you to take Paul down to the Sanhedrin tomorrow, as though they meant to enquire more closely into his case.

GWN Acts 23:20 The young man answered, "The Jews have planned to ask you to bring Paul to the Jewish council tomorrow. They're going to make it look as though they want more accurate information about him.

NRS Acts 23:20 He answered, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more thoroughly into his case.

YLT Acts 23:20 and he said -- 'The Jews agreed to request thee, that to-morrow to the sanhedrim thou mayest bring down Paul, as being about to enquire something more exactly concerning him;

- **The Jews** Acts 23:15; Ps 12:2; Daniel 6:5-12
- [Video of Plot to Kill Paul](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S NEPHEW SPELLS OUT DETAILS OF PLOT

**The Jews have agreed to ask** ([erotao](#) - making a request of) **you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council** ([sunedrion](#) - Sanhedrin) **as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly** ([akribos](#) - accurately, exactly) **about him** - "Paul's nephew told him, "Some Jews are going to ask you to bring Paul before the high council tomorrow, pretending they want to get some more information." (NLT)

**Robertson on Jews** - As if the whole nation was in the conspiracy and so in Acts 23:12. The conspirators may have belonged to the Zealots, but clearly they represented the state of Jewish feeling toward Paul in Jerusalem.

**Have agreed** (4934) ([suntithemi](#) from **sun** = together + **tithemi** = to place, put) means literally to put together side by side. The three uses in the NT are all in the middle voice which conveys the meaning "to agree with," to work out a joint arrangement. Although **suntithēmi** can be used in a positive manner, its appearances in Scripture are all negative, as certain groups of people came together to scheme against those who were godly. In Luke 22:5 the chief priests and teachers of the Law came to an "agreement" to pay Judas for betraying Jesus. In John 9:22 the Jewish leaders "decided" to excommunicate anyone who believed Jesus to be the Messiah. Finally, here in Acts 23:20 relates the "pact" among the Jews as they plotted to kill Paul. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Bring down** (2609) ([katago](#) from **kata** = + **ago** = bring) means (1) to lead or to bring down (Acts 9:30; 22:30; 23:15, 20, 28; Rom. 10:6; Sept.: Gen. 44:21; 1 Kings 1:33). (2) As a navigation term, to cause a boat to put in at a shore or to land (Lk 5:11) or brought bring to shore (Acts 21:3; 27:3; 28:12).

**Gilbrant** - It denotes bringing someone down from a topographically higher elevation to a lower one (e.g., Acts 9:30). In the passive voice it appears to be a nautical idiom meaning "to put into harbor" (in Sidon, Acts 27:3; in Syracuse, Acts 28:12). In Luke 5:11 the

verb is used similarly meaning "to bring (the boats) to shore." In Romans 10:6 Paul used katagō figuratively in part of his description of righteousness which is rooted in faith: "But the righteousness that is by faith says: 'Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down)" (NIV). Then righteous have no need to "bring Christ down" because the Incarnation has already taken place; instead, we need to confess with our mouths and lives that He is Lord (Romans 10:9).

**Katago** - bring...down(3), brought(1), brought...down(3), put(2).

Lk. 5:11; Acts 9:30; Acts 22:30; Acts 23:15; Acts 23:20; Acts 23:28; Acts 27:3; Acts 28:12; Rom. 10:6

Katago in Septuagint -

Gen. 37:25; Gen. 37:28; Gen. 39:1; Gen. 42:38; Gen. 43:11; Gen. 44:21; Gen. 44:29; Gen. 44:31; Gen. 45:13; Jdg. 7:4; Jdg. 16:21; 1 Sam. 2:6; 1 Sam. 19:12; 1 Sam. 30:15; 1 Sam. 30:16; 1 Ki. 1:33; 1 Ki. 2:6; 1 Ki. 2:9; 1 Ki. 2:35; 1 Ki. 5:9; 1 Ki. 6:35; 1 Ki. 17:23; 1 Ki. 18:40; 2 Ki. 11:19; Ps. 22:15; Ps. 31:17; Ps. 55:23; Ps. 56:7; Ps. 59:11; Ps. 78:16; Prov. 5:5; Prov. 7:27; Isa. 9:3; Isa. 26:5; Isa. 63:3; Isa. 63:6; Jer. 9:18; Jer. 13:17; Jer. 14:17; Lam. 1:13; Lam. 1:16; Lam. 2:10; Lam. 2:18; Lam. 3:48; Ezek. 26:11; Hos. 7:12; Joel 3:2; Amos 3:11; Amos 9:2; Obad. 1:3; Obad. 1:4;

**Were going to inquire** (4441)(**punthanomai**) means to **inquire**, ask, seek to learn usually from someone (Mt 2:4; Lk 15:26; 18:36; Jn 4:52; Acts 4:7; 10:18, 29; 21:33; 23:19f.) The word carries the sense of asking by inquiry, rather than asking by making a request to receive something. (2). To learn by inquiry, to find out by inquiry (Acts 23:34). When the twins Jacob and Esau struggled in the womb, Rebekah "went to **inquire** of the LORD." (Ge 25:22).

**Acts 23:21 "So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they slay him; and now they are ready and waiting for the promise from you."**

KJV Acts 23:21 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.

NET Acts 23:21 So do not let them persuade you to do this, because more than forty of them are lying in ambush for him. They have bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink anything until they have killed him, and now they are ready, waiting for you to agree to their request."

GNT Acts 23:21 σ ο υ μ πεισθ ς α τ ο ς· νεδρε ουσιν γ ρ α τ ν ξ α τ ν νδρες πλε ους τεσσερ κοντα, ο τινες νεθεμ πισαν αυτο ς μ τε φαγε ν μ τε πιε ν ως ο ν λωσιν α τ ν, κα ν ν ε σιν τοιμοι προσδεχ μενοι τ ν π σο παγγελ αν.

NLT Acts 23:21 There are more than forty men hiding along the way ready to ambush him. They have vowed not to eat or drink anything until they have killed him. They are ready now, just waiting for your consent."

ESV Acts 23:21 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."

CSB Acts 23:21 Don't let them persuade you, because there are more than 40 of them arranging to ambush him, men who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they kill him. Now they are ready, waiting for a commitment from you."

NIV Acts 23:21 Don't give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request."

NAB Acts 23:21 but do not believe them. More than forty of them are lying in wait for him; they have bound themselves by oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are now ready and only wait for your consent."

NKJ Acts 23:21 "But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you."

NJB Acts 23:21 Do not believe them. There are more than forty of them lying in wait for him, and they have

vowed not to eat or drink until they have got rid of him. They are ready now and only waiting for your order to be given.'

GWN Acts 23:21 Don't let them persuade you to do this. More than forty of them are planning to ambush him. They have asked God to curse them if they eat or drink anything before they have murdered him. They are ready now and are expecting you to promise that you will bring Paul."

NRS Acts 23:21 But do not be persuaded by them, for more than forty of their men are lying in ambush for him. They have bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink until they kill him. They are ready now and are waiting for your consent."

YLT Acts 23:21 thou, therefore, mayest thou not yield to them, for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, who did anathematize themselves -- not to eat nor to drink till they kill him, and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from thee.'

- **do not listen to them** Exodus 23:2
- **for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him** Acts 23:12-14; 9:23,24; 14:5,6; 20:19; 25:3; 2 Cor 11:26,32,33
- **bound themselves under a curse** Acts 23: 14; Ro 9:3
- [Video of Plot to Kill Paul](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **PAUL'S NEPHEW TO COMMANDER: DON'T GIVE IN TO THE JEWISH RUSE**

**Ruse** is a deceptive maneuver, an action intended to mislead, deceive, or trick.

**So do not listen to them** - Double negative (ou...me) signifying absolutely in no way give in to their trickery! Literally **'do not be persuaded by them.'** "But don't do it!" (NLT) Remember the commander knew that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had the duty to protect his prisoner!

**Listen** (persuade) (3982)(**peitho**) means literally to persuade or induce by words to believe (Acts 19:26, Mt 27:20, Ro 14:14). Persuade means to win approval or support for; to cause somebody to adopt a certain position, belief, or course of action; to twist somebody's arm.

**For** - Term of explanation - Paul's nephew explains why the commander must not yield to the request/

**More than forty of them are lying in wait for him** - The Jews were waiting to ambush Paul. As he related this story, the plotters were ready to spring the trap on Paul.

**Lying in wait** (1748)(**enedreuo** from **enedra** = ambush) means to lie in wait as in war or in ambush in order to kill someone. **BDAG** - to conceal oneself in a suitable position for surprise attack, to use intrigue - plot." It is used only in Acts 23:21 and Lk 11:54 where the Pharisees and scribes were **"plotting** against Him to catch Him in something He might say." In Lk 11:54+ the verb is more figurative for they were "lying in wait" so to speak planning with the purpose of bringing harm (to Jesus). Of a harlot who "lurks by every corner." (ready to "ambush" a naive man - Pr 7:12)

**Louw-Nida** - to conceal oneself or to proceed secretly, while waiting for an appropriate opportunity to attack - 'to be in an ambush, to make plans for a secret attack, ambush.

**Enedreuo** in the Septuagint -

Deut. 19:11 = "lies in wait for him"; Jos. 8:4 "See, you are going to ambush the city"; Jdg. 9:25 = "The men of Shechem set men in ambush against him"; Jdg. 9:32; Jdg. 9:34; Jdg. 9:43; Jdg. 16:2; Jdg. 21:20; 1 Sam. 15:5; 2 Sam. 3:27; Job 24:11; Job 38:40; Ps. 10:9; Prov. 7:12; Prov. 26:19; Lam. 3:10; Lam. 4:19; Lk. 11:54; Acts 23:21

**Who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they slay (anaireo) him - Bound under an oath (332)** see above on [anathematizo](#)

**And now they are ready (hetoimos) and waiting (prosdexomai - expectantly) for the promise (epaggelia/epangelia) from you** - "They are ready now and are waiting for your consent." (NRSV) "This item is all that is needed to put the scheme through, the young man shrewdly adds." (Robertson)

**Ready** (also in Acts 23:15)(2092)(**hetoimos** from an old noun **heteos** = fitness) means ready, prepared, in a state of readiness.

They are ready and willing!

**Waiting** (4327)([prosdechomai](#) from **pros** = in compound Greek words implies motion or direction toward + **dechomai** = a deliberate and ready reception) describes one who is waiting for something with a sense of expectancy. These Satanically inspired Jews are waiting expectantly to take a temporal life. This is so sad, because this same verb is used to describe Spirit inspired saints eagerly looking for the One Who is life eternal! (Lk 2:25, 38+).

**Andrews** - "They had planned together and now they were waiting on the commander's promise to the council to have another meeting. The ball was now in the commander's court—he would now have to do something with the information that he had received!" (Ibid)

**Acts 23:22 So the commander let the young man go, instructing him, "Tell no one that you have notified me of these things."**

KJV Acts 23:22 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.

NET Acts 23:22 Then the commanding officer sent the young man away, directing him, "Tell no one that you have reported these things to me."

GNT Acts 23:22 μ ν ο ν χιλ αρχος π λυσε τ ν νεαν σκον παραγγε λας μηδεν κλαλσαι τι τα τα νεφ νισας πρ ς με.

NLT Acts 23:22 "Don't let anyone know you told me this," the commander warned the young man.

KJV Acts 23:22 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.

ESV Acts 23:22 So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, "Tell no one that you have informed me of these things."

CSB Acts 23:22 So the commander dismissed the young man and instructed him, "Don't tell anyone that you have informed me about this."

NIV Acts 23:22 The commander dismissed the young man and cautioned him, "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me."

NAB Acts 23:22 As the commander dismissed the young man he directed him, "Tell no one that you gave me this information."

NKJ Acts 23:22 So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded him, "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me."

NJB Acts 23:22 The tribune let the young man go with this order, 'Tell no one that you have given me this information.'

GWN Acts 23:22 The officer dismissed the young man and ordered him not to tell this information to anyone else.

NRS Acts 23:22 So the tribune dismissed the young man, ordering him, "Tell no one that you have informed me of this."

YLT Acts 23:22 The chief captain, then, indeed, let the young man go, having charged him to tell no one, 'that these things thou didst shew unto me;'

- Joshua 2:14; Mark 1:44
- [Video of Plot to Kill Paul](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So the commander ([chiliarchos](#)) let the young man go** - "So the tribune dismissed the young man" - It is interesting that the Roman did not ask for corroboration of this unusual story. Of course, given the behavior of Jewish people outside of the Fortress and the Jewish leaders in the council, he clearly believed the young man's story.

**Young man** (also Acts 23:18)([3495](#))([neaniskos](#) a diminutive of **neanias** [from **neos** = new, young] = a youth, young man, Acts



7:58, 20:9) describes a youth in the prime of life (from 20 to 40 years of age) (Mt 19:20) or an older boy (Acts 23:18) .

**Instructing him "Tell no one that you have notified me of these things."** - The shrewd commander did not want the Jewish gang to know that the "jig was up" so to speak.

**Instructing** (3853)(**paraggello**) means to hand on or pass on an announcement from one to another who is at one's side, such as to what must be done, usually with the idea of a command or charge.

**MacArthur** - If the conspirators realized their plot had been uncovered, they would undoubtedly have abandoned it and formulated another. And if that one were not discovered, Lysias reasoned, Paul might be killed. Further, if the Jews did not know that he knew of the plot, they could not question his motives for sending Paul to Caesarea. (Ibid)

**Stedman** - When the plot was laid God relied upon Paul's relative, his nephew, to help him. If you will permit a very bad pun, he was "*relatively*" safe.

**Longenecker** - The seriousness with which the commander took the warning about the plot shows that he knew Ananias was the kind of man to fall in with it and realized that Jewish feeling against Paul was strong enough to nurture such a plot. (Ibid)

**Barclay** quips "we see the lengths to which the Roman government would go in order to administer impartial justice. Paul was a prisoner; but he was a Roman citizen and therefore the commander mobilized a small army to see him taken in safety to Caesarea to be tried before Felix. It is strange how the fanatical hatred of the Jews--God's chosen people--contrasts with the impartial justice of the commander--a heathen in Jewish eyes."

**John Phillips** - "God delights to work behind the scenes. A storm of rain perhaps, a delay in a traffic jam, or a seemingly chance meeting and, often unknown to us, some danger has been averted or some change of direction has been wrought in our lives. Omnipotence has His agents everywhere." (Exploring Acts)

**ILLUSTRATION** - **Paderewski**, the famous concert pianist, was scheduled to perform at a great concert hall in America. It was an all-out black tux-long-evening-dress kind of night. In the audience that evening was a mother with her fidgety nine year old son. Weary of waiting for the concert to begin, the lad squirmed constantly in his seat. His mother hoped her boy would be encouraged to practice the piano once he heard the immortal Paderewski. That is why, against his wishes, he was there. When his mother turned to talk to some friends, the impatient boy could stay seated no longer. He slipped away from her side and was drawn to the ebony concert grand Steinway and its leather stool on the huge stage flooded with lights. Largely ignored by the sophisticated audience, the boy sat down at the stool, stared wide eyed at the black and white keys. He places his small trembling fingers on the right location and began to play "chopsticks." The roar of the crowd quickly ceased as hundreds of frowning faces turned on him. Irritated and embarrassed, they began to shout at the boy. Backstage the master, overhearing the sounds, quickly put on his coat and rushed to the stage. Paderewski came behind the boy and began to improvise a countermelody to harmonize with and enhance "Chopsticks ." As the two of them played together, Paderewski kept whispering in the boy's ears, "Keep going. Do not quit, son. Keep on playing. Do not stop. Do not quit!" Maybe we feel like that young man that our best service for the Lord is more like "Chopsticks." Look up because the Master will come alongside of us and encourage us and make our ministry a miracle! The message of Christ is not only to Paul, but to His followers! (Jack Andrews)

**Acts 23:23 And he called to him 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."**

KJV Acts 23:23 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;

NET Acts 23:23 Then he summoned two of the centurions and said, "Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea along with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen by nine o'clock tonight,

GNT Acts 23:23 Κα προσκαλεσμενος δ ο [τιν ς] τ ν καπονταρχ ν ε πεν, τοιμ σατε στρατι τας διακοσ ους, πως πορευθ σιν ως Καισαρε ας, κα ππε ς βδομ κοντα κα δεξιολ βους διακοσ ους π τρ της ρας τ ς νυκτ ς,

NLT Acts 23:23 Then the commander called two of his officers and ordered, "Get 200 soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea at nine o'clock tonight. Also take 200 spearmen and 70 mounted troops.

ESV Acts 23:23 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.

CSB Acts 23:23 He summoned two of his centurions and said, "Get 200 soldiers ready with 70 cavalry and 200 spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight.

NIV Acts 23:23 Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, "Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight.

NAB Acts 23:23 Then he summoned two of the centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready to go to Caesarea by nine o'clock tonight, along with seventy horsemen and two hundred auxiliaries.

NKJ Acts 23:23 And he called for two centurions, saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night;

NJB Acts 23:23 Then he summoned two of the centurions and said, 'Get two hundred soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea by the third hour of the night with seventy cavalry and two hundred auxiliaries;

GWN Acts 23:23 Then the officer summoned two of his sergeants and told them, "I want 200 infantrymen, 70 soldiers on horseback, and 200 soldiers with spears. Have them ready to go to Caesarea at nine o'clock tonight.

NRS Acts 23:23 Then he summoned two of the centurions and said, "Get ready to leave by nine o'clock tonight for Caesarea with two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen.

YLT Acts 23:23 and having called near a certain two of the centurions, he said, 'Make ready soldiers two hundred, that they may go on unto Caesarea, and horsemen seventy, and spearmen two hundred, from the third hour of the night;

- **two of the centurions** Mt 14:25; Luke 12:38
- [Video of Paul's transfer to Caesarea](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE GREAT ESCAPE!

Pagan Romans are "enlisted" by God's sovereign providential hand to ensure Paul's escape. Jesus had promised Paul safe passage and would ensure he had a ticket to Rome.

**And he called to him two of the centurions and said** - The regimented Romans now take recourse to prevent a disaster. The commander knew he would be held accountable for Paul, as a Roman citizen and if Paul were assassinated, the commander himself would be punished. Therefore, he did not waste any time.

**"Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen** - Why Caesarea? The seat of Roman government was not in Jerusalem but in Caesarea.

**Gilbrant** - [Caesarea](#) was built by Herod the Great on the coast about 30 miles north of Joppa. Herod also constructed a 200-foot-wide causeway of huge stones in water 60 feet deep in order to enclose an artificial harbor that was unusually large for that day. The Roman procurators or governors made this city their chief residence. Archaeologists have found the name of Pilate inscribed on one of the stones. (Complete Biblical Library – Acts)

[Caesarea](#) mentioned 17x in NT -

Matt. 16:13; Mk. 8:27; Acts 8:40; Acts 9:30; Acts 10:1; Acts 10:24; Acts 11:11; Acts 12:19; Acts 18:22; Acts 21:8; Acts 21:16; Acts 23:23; Acts 23:33; Acts 25:1; Acts 25:4; Acts 25:6; Acts 25:13

**Jack Andrews** - [Caesarea](#) was a fairly new city. It was built just two decades before the birth of the Lord Jesus. At this time the city would have been around 70 to 80 years old. The city was 60 to 65 miles Northwest of Jerusalem. Caesarea became the Headquarters for Roman governors of the region of Judea. The city was a port city on the coast of Israel. Herod the Great spared no expense in the construction of a magnificent artificial harbor that protected the ships that sailed from incoming storms. A massive aqueduct also ran down from Mt. Carmel 20 miles that brought fresh water to the city. Caesarea would be where we are introduced to the residing governor of [Judea Marcus Antonius Felix](#) (Ibid)

**The third hour** - This would have been 9 PM when it was presumably completely dark for the greater secrecy, and to elude the cunning, active malice of the Jews. Paul would be escorted by 470 trained Roman soldiers, all with one goal of ensuring safe passage for one little Jewish man.

**Jack Arnold** - The Romans called out 470 soldiers to protect Paul and bring him to Felix in Caesarea. That was a small army and no band of 40 Jewish zealots would attack a force like that. **Who raised this army of soldiers--Claudius Lysias or God?** It was God using Claudius Lysias. The most amazing thing is the way Claudius Lysias believed and received the report of the young lad and acted immediately. He could have brushed the report aside but he did not. This whole thing seems like an accident but there are no accidents with God. **Why do men buck so hard at divine providence?** They do not want to believe God controls everything because man seems to be a puppet, or they cannot reconcile God's love with a plan which includes suffering and sickness. Men think this is unfair according to their own standard of reasoning. But what are our choices? There are just two. Either everything happens by accident and man is left to pure chance and fate, or things are planned by God and all things are working out for God's own glory, for the good of God's elect and for the return of God's Son, Jesus Christ. To know that God has a plan and is carrying out this plan brings confidence, assurance and boldness to the Christian, for he senses he is a man of destiny. Let's face it, it is God's providence which change the course of history. When the **Spanish Armada** sailed to fight the English, there was no human way the English could win this naval battle. Yet, God providentially saw to it that a terrible storm arose which would destroy much of the Spanish fleet. The English then defeated the Spanish, and Protestantism rather than Roman Catholicism would rule in England. That event has affected you and me today. God also prepared Paul by having Claudius Lysias write a letter of acquittal, freeing Paul of any serious charges. This simple letter prepared the way for Paul to appear before the Roman governor Felix. This again shows the sovereign hand of God who works through non-Christians to accomplish His own will without them even being aware that they are being used in any way. God simply works through the normal reactions and feelings of the persons involved. Is divine providence (predestination) the same as fatalism? No! **Fatalism** says what will be will be and nothing can change it; that is, God or Fate has a cold calculating plan and no matter what man does it cannot be changed. Predestination and divine providence, however, state that God has a plan that shall be carried out but behind that plan is an all wise, sovereign and loving God who is using means to accomplish His ends. While God is the First Cause, He also uses second causes such as prayer, responsibility, decisions, witnessing, etc., and these second causes are just as vital to the plan of God as the primary cause.

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**Jack Andrews** - The passengers on the train were uneasy as they sped along through the dark, stormy night. The lightening was flashing, the black clouds were rolling, and the train was traveling fast. The fear and tension among the passengers was evident. One little boy, however, was sitting all by himself and seemed unaware of the storm and the speed of the train. He was amusing himself with a few toys. One of the passengers spoke to him. "Son, I see you are all alone on the train. Aren't you afraid to travel alone on such a stormy night?" The little boy looked up with a smile and said, "No ma'am, I ain't afraid. My daddy's the engineer."

The Lord Jesus had appeared to Paul and spoke to Paul words of comfort and surety. The Lord told Paul to take courage because just as sure as he had testified of the Lord in Jerusalem, so too he must testify in Rome also. God had given Paul His promise, plan, and providence! God was working things out for His glory in the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. God would take care of His servant and see to it that he came to Rome safely. In the song "Thou O Lord" are these words that remind us of God's protection and care for us:

- Many are they increase that trouble; many are they that rise up against me. Many be there that say of my soul—there is no help for him in God.
- But thou O Lord are a shield for me—my glory and the lifter of my head. Thou O Lord—are a shield for me— my glory and the lifter of my head.
- I cried unto the Lord with my voice and He heard me out of His holy hill. I lay me down and slept and awaked for the Lord sustained me.
- For thou O Lord are a shield for me—my glory and the lifter of my head. Thou O Lord are a shield for me— my glory and the lifter of my head!

Paul found out by living for Jesus, serving Jesus, obeying Jesus that the Lord is a shield for His soldiers. Those who know the Lord, serve the Lord, follow the Lord will have the Divine protection of the Lord! Until God is finished with us and calls us home any and all enemies cannot overcome and destroy God's people! David Jeremiah wrote, "Though moment by moment Paul seems to be on the edge of jeopardy, he is really never in danger—nor are we—because of the faithfulness of God. Wherever God is, is the safest place in the world to be."

Luke declared the work of God in protecting His servant by using the Roman's to deliver him from the murderous plots of the Jews. God works on behalf of His people to insure their work and witness brings glory to His name. I want to challenge the people of God to trust God in and through any and all difficult times—knowing that God works all things out for His glory! Are you trusting God in the midst of adversity? Do you rely on God to work and to shield you from the attacks of the enemy? This passage gives some insights into the working of God in the protecting of His servant. (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts - Volume 6)

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**GOD'S UNEXPECTED WAYS** God works in unexpected and amusing ways. God could have used any one of an infinite number of methods to get Paul to Caesarea, but he chose to use the Roman army (23:23-24). God's ways are not our ways. Ours are limited; his are not. Don't limit God by asking him to do things your way. When God intervenes, anything can happen, so much more and so much better than you could ever anticipate. Let God amaze you with his limitless power and his creative plans. (Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts)

**Acts 23:24 They were also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor.**

KJV Acts 23:24 And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.

GNT Acts 23:24 κτ νη τε παραστσαι να πιβιβσαντες τ ν Πα λον διασσωσι πρ ς Φ λικα τ ν γεμ να,

NLT Acts 23:24 Provide horses for Paul to ride, and get him safely to Governor Felix."

ESV Acts 23:24 Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix the governor."

CSB Acts 23:24 Also provide mounts so they can put Paul on them and bring him safely to Felix the governor."

NIV Acts 23:24 Provide mounts for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix."

NAB Acts 23:24 Provide mounts for Paul to ride and give him safe conduct to Felix the governor."

NKJ Acts 23:24 "and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor."

NJB Acts 23:24 provide horses for Paul, and deliver him unharmed to Felix the governor.'

GWN Acts 23:24 Provide an animal for Paul to ride, and take him safely to Governor Felix."

NRS Acts 23:24 Also provide mounts for Paul to ride, and take him safely to Felix the governor."

YLT Acts 23:24 beasts also provide, that, having set Paul on, they may bring him safe unto Felix the governor;'

- **They were also to provide mounts** Nehemiah 2:12; Esther 8:12; Luke 10:34
- **Felix** Acts 23:26,33-35; 24:3,10,22-27; 25:14
- **the governor** Mt 27:2; Luke 3:1
- [Video of Paul's transfer to Caesarea](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **PAUL RIDES OFF AFTER THE SUN SETS**

**They were also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor-** The idea was not just security (470 soldiers) but speed. The Romans provide a horse for Paul to ride to **Caesarea**. "Ahead of him, before he even came to Rome, lay two years of confinement in Caesarea. And after he arrived at Rome he was a prisoner there at least another three years....But ahead there are two lonely years of waiting in Caesarea, during which nothing is recorded of his ministry. I am sure he had a ministry during that time, but there is no account of it in the Scriptures. " (Stedman)

**Andrews on Felix** - History tells us that Marcus Antonius Felix was not a good man. Felix was appointed as governor of the province of Judea in 52 A.D and there he reigned for seven years. He owed his high standing in the Roman government of his brother Pallas who had great influence during the reign if the Roman Emperor Claudius. Felix was a cruel man who reigned with an iron fist. (Ibid)

According to **Tacitus** in "the Histories" volume V we learn: "[Antonius Felix](#) indulging in every kind of barbarity and lust, exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave."

**A T Robertson** - Felix was a brother of Pallas, the notorious favourite of Claudius. Both had been slaves and were now freedmen. Felix was made procurator of Judea by Claudius A.D. 52. He held the position till Festus succeeded him after complaints by the Jews to Nero. He married Drusilla the daughter of Herod Agrippa I with the hope of winning the favour of the Jews. He was one of the most depraved men of his time. Tacitus says of him that "with all cruelty and lust he exercised the power of a king with the spirit

of a slave." The term "governor" (hēgemōn) means "leader" from hēgeomai, to lead, and was applied to leaders of all sorts (emperors, kings, procurators). In the N.T. it is used of Pilate (Matthew 27:2), of Felix, (Acts 23:24, 26, 33; Acts 24:1), of Festus (Acts 26:30).

**Herschel Ford** wrote, "Did ever a preacher have such an escort? Here are four hundred and seventy Roman soldiers, armed to the teeth, with Paul sitting on a horse in the midst of them... Preachers still need protection today. They need to be surrounded by the prayers of their people, by the love and cooperation of their flock. If your pastor is a true man of God, be jealous for his good name. Give him all the protection he needs, and so help him to do a greater work for the Lord."

**Barclay** - The governor to whom Paul was taken was [Felix](#) and his name was a byword. For five years he had governed Judaea and for two years before that he had been stationed in Samaria; he had still two years to go before being dismissed from his post. He had begun life as a slave. His brother, Pallas, was the favourite of Nero. Through the influence of Pallas, Felix had risen first to be a freedman and then to be a governor. He was the first slave in history ever to become the governor of a Roman province. Tacitus, the Roman historian, said of him, "He exercised the prerogatives of a king with the spirit of a slave." He had actually been married to three princesses one after another. The name of the first is not known; the second was a grand-daughter of Antony and Cleopatra; the third was Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa the First. He was completely unscrupulous and was capable of hiring thugs to murder his own closest supporters. It was to face a man like that that Paul went to Caesarea.

#### Related Resources:

- [Who is Felix in the Bible?](#)
- [Antonius Felix - Wikipedia](#) - Felix's cruelty and licentiousness, coupled with his accessibility to bribes (see Acts 24:26), led to a great increase of crime in Judaea. The period of his rule was marked by internal feuds and disturbances, which he put down with severity.

#### Acts 23:25 And he wrote a letter having this form:

KJV Acts 23:25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

NET Acts 23:25 He wrote a letter that went like this:

GNT Acts 23:25 γρ ψαζ πιστολ ν χουσαν τ ν τ πον το τον·

NLT Acts 23:25 Then he wrote this letter to the governor:

ESV Acts 23:25 And he wrote a letter to this effect:

CSB Acts 23:25 He wrote a letter of this kind:

NIV Acts 23:25 He wrote a letter as follows:

NAB Acts 23:25 Then he wrote a letter with this content:

NKJ Acts 23:25 He wrote a letter in the following manner:

NJB Acts 23:25 He also wrote a letter in these terms:

GWN Acts 23:25 The officer wrote a letter to the governor with the following message:

NRS Acts 23:25 He wrote a letter to this effect:

YLT Acts 23:25 he having written a letter after this description:

**And he wrote a letter having this form** - "then he wrote a letter that went like this." Claudius Lysias sends this letter so that the Roman governor would understand the background. In fact it was required when a Roman officer sent a prisoner to his superior to send a letter of explanation.

**Stedman** - Now notice the preparation for Paul's appearance before the governor, again part of the protection of the Lord, which is provided by the letter that the tribune wrote.

**A T Robertson** - The use of tupon (type or form) like *exemplum* in Latin (Page who quotes Cicero *Ad Att.* IX. 6. 3) may give merely the purport or substantial contents of the letter. But there is no reason for thinking that it is not a genuine copy since the letter may have been read in open court before Felix, and Luke was probably with Paul. The Roman law required that a subordinate officer like Lysias in reporting a case to his superior should send a written statement of the case and it was termed *elogium*. A copy of the letter may have been given Paul after his appeal to Caesar. It was probably written in Latin. The letter is a "dexterous mixture of truth and

falsehood" (Furneaux) with the stamp of genuineness. It puts things in a favourable light for Lysias and makes no mention of his order to scourge Paul.

**Longenecker on this form** (or this type) - In saying that the commander wrote a letter "of this type" (lit., "having this pattern"; NIV, "as follows"), Luke acknowledged that what follows is only the general purport of the letter. He would hardly have been in a position to read the correspondence between a Roman commander and a Roman provincial governor. What he knew of the letter probably came from Paul, who himself would only have known about its contents as the governor used it in the initial questioning of his prisoner. (Ibid)

**Keener** - The empire (except perhaps for Egypt) had no postal service except for official government business; most people sent letters via slaves or friends. The commander sends this letter with the soldiers.(Ibid)

### Acts 23:26 "Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings.

KJV Acts 23:26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting.

NET Acts 23:26 Claudius Lysias to His Excellency Governor Felix, greetings.

GNT Acts 23:26 Κλα διος Λυσιας τ κρατ στ γεμ νι Φ λικι χα ρειν.

NLT Acts 23:26 "From Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings!

ESV Acts 23:26 "Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings.

CSB Acts 23:26 Claudius Lysias, To the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings.

NIV Acts 23:26 Claudius Lysias, To His Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings.

NAB Acts 23:26 "Claudius Lysias to his excellency the governor Felix, greetings.

NKJ Acts 23:26 Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings.

NJB Acts 23:26 'Claudius Lysias to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings.

GWN Acts 23:26 Claudius Lysias sends greetings to Your Excellency, Governor Felix:

NRS Acts 23:26 "Claudius Lysias to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings.

YLT Acts 23:26 'Claudius Lysias, to the most noble governor Felix, hail:

BBE Acts 23:26 Claudius Lysias, to the most noble ruler, Felix, peace be with you.

- **to the most excellent governor Felix** Acts 24:3; 26:25;; Luke 1:3
- **greetings** Acts 15:23; James 1:1; 3 John 1:14
- [Video of Paul's transfer to Caesarea](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings** - Notice that ancient letters told who the author was at the beginning, not after you had read the letter (cf 1 Th 1:1, etc).

**Most excellent** (2903)(**kratistos** superlative from **kratus** = strong) is an honorary way to address high officials. Most noble. **BDAG** - "strongly affirmative honorary form of address." Used to address Theophilus, Claudius (Acts 23:26), Felix (Acts 24:3) and Festus (Acts 26:25). Used 4x in NT - Lk. 1:3; Acts 23:26; Acts 24:3; Acts 26:25

**Longenecker** - The title "**Excellency**" (*kratistos*) originally denoted a member of the Roman equestrian order (Lat. *egregius*), like that of knights in Britain. Later it became an honorific title for highly placed officials in the Roman government (as here, Acts 24:3; 26:25), but it was also used as a form of polite address (cf. Acts 1:1). (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 9: John and Acts)

**Thompson** - Felix was very high in the Roman hierarchy. There are four major sources of historical data from this time in history: 1) The Bible; 2) Suetonius; 3) Tacitus; 4) Josephus, and all four talk about Felix. Felix was born into slavery but was given his freedom either by the mother of Claudius (Tacitus) or by Claudius himself (Josephus). He rose high in Roman politics. He was the governor of Judea from A.D. 52-59. He was a corrupt politician. According to Tacitus, he was known for stamping out Jewish uprisings in brutal and ruthless ways. So this was his kind of case.

**Greetings** is the verb **chairo** used in letters (Acts 15:23; James 1:1) and in countless papyri." (Robertson) Since the verb

[chairo](#) meant to be in a state of happiness and well being, the idea in a formalized greeting was that of wishing one well.

**Acts 23:27 "When this man was arrested by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman.**

KJV Acts 23:27 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.

NET Acts 23:27 This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, when I came up with the detachment and rescued him, because I had learned that he was a Roman citizen.

GNT Acts 23:27 Τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦτον συλληφθέντα πρὸς τὴν οὐδαιῶν καὶ μιλόντα ναίρεισθαι πρὸς τὴν πιστοσύνην στρατείας ξειλήμην μαθὼν τιμωρῆσαι.

NLT Acts 23:27 "This man was seized by some Jews, and they were about to kill him when I arrived with the troops. When I learned that he was a Roman citizen, I removed him to safety.

KJV Acts 23:27 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.

ESV Acts 23:27 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.

CSB Acts 23:27 When this man had been seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, I arrived with my troops and rescued him because I learned that he is a Roman citizen.

NIV Acts 23:27 This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen.

NAB Acts 23:27 This man, seized by the Jews and about to be murdered by them, I rescued after intervening with my troops when I learned that he was a Roman citizen.

NKJ Acts 23:27 This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman.

NJB Acts 23:27 This man had been seized by the Jews and would have been murdered by them; but I came on the scene with my troops and got him away, having discovered that he was a Roman citizen.

GWN Acts 23:27 The Jews had seized this man and were going to murder him. When I found out that he was a Roman citizen, I went with my soldiers to rescue him.

NRS Acts 23:27 This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, but when I had learned that he was a Roman citizen, I came with the guard and rescued him.

YLT Acts 23:27 This man having been taken by the Jews, and being about to be killed by them -- having come with the soldiery, I rescued him, having learned that he is a Roman;

- **When this man was arrested by the Jews** Acts 23: 10; 21:31-33; 24:7
- **having learned that he was a Roman** Acts 22:25-29
- [Video of Paul's transfer to Caesarea](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAINTING ONE'S SELF IN A "GOOD LIGHT"

The idiom [paint in a good light](#) means to depict or show in a particular way, or from a particular perspective that is good, positive, favorable to the one "painting" the picture.

**When this man was arrested by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman** - Claudius conveniently leaves out the scene in which he almost had Paul scourged! Like natural men often do to save face, he is not telling the full story, for fear of reprimand.

**Stedman** adds "It is obvious that this tribune wrote a letter that would make himself look as good as possible in the eyes of the

governor. He handles the truth rather loosely. He implies that he rescued Paul because he learned that he was a Roman citizen. This would certainly look good on his record. But actually, as we know, he rescued him because he was in danger, and then learned that he was a citizen just before he was about to beat and scourge him unlawfully. But he did not put that detail in. **This is a politician's letter.**" ([Sermon](#))

**Arrested** (4815) ([sullambano](#) from [sun/syn](#) = together with + [lambáno](#) = to take, to seize) means literally to seize or take together and conveys the picture of clasping, seizing or capturing. **Sullambano** has several meanings depending on the context, the most common meaning being to arrest someone (7/16 uses) or take them into custody. To apprehend someone by virtue of a warrant from authority.

All uses of **sullambano** -

Matt. 26:55; Mk. 14:48; Lk. 1:24; Lk. 1:31; Lk. 1:36; Lk. 2:21; Lk. 5:7; Lk. 5:9; Lk. 22:54; Jn. 18:12; Acts 1:16; Acts 12:3; Acts 23:27; Acts 26:21; Phil. 4:3; Jas. 1:15

**To be slain** (337) ([anaireo](#) from [ana](#) = up + [haireo](#) = to take) literally means to take up or lift up (from the ground), which is used literally to describe Pharaoh's daughter when she **"took** him (Moses) **away** and nurtured him as her own son." (Acts 7:21). Most of the uses of **anaireo** are used in an active sense to refer to literal killing or putting to death (Acts 23:15; Acts 23:21; Acts 23:27). **BDAG** has "to get rid of by execution, *do away with, destroy*, of pers. *someone*, mostly of killing by violence, in battle, by execution, murder, or assassination."

Uses of **anaireo** in **Acts** -

Acts 2:23; Acts 5:33; Acts 5:36; Acts 7:21; Acts 7:28; Acts 9:23; Acts 9:24; Acts 9:29; Acts 10:39; Acts 12:2; Acts 13:28; Acts 16:27; Acts 22:20; Acts 23:15; Acts 23:21; Acts 23:27; Acts 25:3; Acts 26:10

**Rescued** (delivered) (1807) ([exaireo](#) from [ek](#) = out + [aireo](#) = to take, remove, seize) literally means to take out. In the [middle voice](#) (as in this verse) means to take out for oneself and hence to rescue or deliver from a perilous circumstance, setting them free. This is the verb Paul uses in Galatians 1:4+ to describe every believer's great rescue/deliverance by the Great Deliverer "Who gave Himself for our sins so that He might **rescue** us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."

**Having learned** (3129) ([manthano](#) related to the noun [mathetes](#) = disciple, a learner) has the basic meaning of directing one's mind to something and producing an external effect. Luke's only use of this verb in Gospels or Acts.

**MacArthur** notes that **Claudius Lysias** "gives a reasonably accurate summary of the events leading to his decision to send Paul to Caesarea. Lysias did [embellish](#) things to put himself in the best possible light; contrary to what he wrote, he did not discover Paul's Roman citizenship until after he rescued him. And **he conveniently failed to mention his order to have Paul scourged and his erroneous assumption that he was the famed Egyptian troublemaker.**" (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Acts 23:28 "And wanting to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their Council;**

KJV Acts 23:28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:

NET Acts 23:28 Since I wanted to know what charge they were accusing him of, I brought him down to their council.

GNT Acts 23:28 βουλ μεν ς τε πιγν ναι τ ν α τ αν δι ν νεκ λουν α τ , κατ γαγον ε ς τ συν δριον α τ ν

NLT Acts 23:28 Then I took him to their high council to try to learn the basis of the accusations against him.

ESV Acts 23:28 And desiring to know the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council.

CSB Acts 23:28 Wanting to know the charge they were accusing him of, I brought him down before their Sanhedrin.

NIV Acts 23:28 I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin.

NAB Acts 23:28 I wanted to learn the reason for their accusations against him so I brought him down to their Sanhedrin.

NKJ Acts 23:28 And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council.



NJB Acts 23:28 Wanting to find out what charge they were making against him, I brought him before their Sanhedrin.

GWN Acts 23:28 I wanted to know what they had against him. So I took him to their Jewish council

NRS Acts 23:28 Since I wanted to know the charge for which they accused him, I had him brought to their council.

YLT Acts 23:28 and, intending to know the cause for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their sanhedrim,

- Acts 22:30
- [Video of Paul's transfer to Caesarea](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SEEKING TO DISCOVER THE ACCUSATION AGAINST PAUL

**And wanting ([boulomai](#)) to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their Council ([sunedrion](#))** - Accusing is [imperfect tense](#) indicating the Jews were accusing Paul over and over, again and again, which was certainly factual! NLT " Then I took him to their high council to try to learn the basis of the accusations against him."

**Ascertain** (know, understand) ([1921](#))([epiginosko](#) from [epí](#) intensify force of + [ginosko](#) = to know) means to know fully or with certainty, to become thoroughly acquainted with. **Epiginosko** means to possess more or less definite information about an issue, something the commander never fully realized in Paul's case.

**Accusing** ([1458](#))([egkaleo](#) from [en](#) = in + [kaleo](#) = to call) means to call in, to summon. It was a legal technical term meaning to bring charges against, institute proceedings against someone.

**Gilbrant** - This word developed quite early as a legal technical term meaning "to bring charges against, prosecute." This sense is clearly exemplified in the papyri, along with an extended sense, to "make an appeal." For instance, at the point of satisfying a loan by making the last payment, the creditor would write, ". . . (I) make no further claim (enkaleō)." In both cases the word has to do with taking legal action. The Septuagint usage of this word sheds light on how it is used in the New Testament. In Proverbs 19:5, a false witness is "one who presses (legal) charges deceitfully." (See also Zechariah 1:4, "to whom the prophets made an appeal.") The New Testament sometimes uses enkaleō in Acts where it has the full legal sense of "press charges," especially in connection with Paul's defense of the gospel. The Jews, of course, were the "prosecutors" and the Roman tribunal was the court (Acts 23:28,29; 26:2,7). But Paul also suffered the threat of prosecution at the hands of the Ephesian pagans (Acts 19:38,40). There is, however, one grand exception to all this overt "legal" language, but it is not without the general meaning given above. Romans 8:33 describes the scene of a heavenly court, before which no prosecutor can stand to speak against the believer. ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Egkaleo** - 7x - accused(4), accusing(1), bring a charge(1), bring charges against(1). Acts 19:38; Acts 19:40; Acts 23:28; Acts 23:29; Acts 26:2; Acts 26:7; Rom. 8:33

**Brought...down** ([2609](#)) see note on [katago](#)

**Acts 23:29 and I found him to be accused over questions about their Law, but under no accusation deserving death or imprisonment.**

KJV Acts 23:29 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.

NET Acts 23:29 I found he was accused with reference to controversial questions about their law, but no charge against him deserved death or imprisonment.

GNT Acts 23:29 ν ε ρ ο ν γ κ α λ ο μ ε ν ο ν π ε ρ ζ η τ η μ τ ω ν τ ο ν μ ο υ α τ ν , μ η δ ν δ ξ ι ο ν θ α ν τ ο υ δ ε σ μ ν χ ο ν τ α γ κ λ η μ α .

NLT Acts 23:29 I soon discovered the charge was something regarding their religious law-- certainly nothing worthy of imprisonment or death.

KJV Acts 23:29 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.

ESV Acts 23:29 I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment.

CSB Acts 23:29 I found out that the accusations were about disputed matters in their law, and that there was no charge that merited death or chains.

NIV Acts 23:29 I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment.

NAB Acts 23:29 I discovered that he was accused in matters of controversial questions of their law and not of any charge deserving death or imprisonment.

NKJ Acts 23:29 I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains.

NJB Acts 23:29 I found that the accusation concerned disputed points of their Law, but that there was no charge deserving death or imprisonment.

GWN Acts 23:29 and found their accusations had to do with disputes about Jewish teachings. He wasn't accused of anything for which he deserved to die or to be put into prison.

NRS Acts 23:29 I found that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but was charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment.

YLT Acts 23:29 whom I found accused concerning questions of their law, and having no accusation worthy of death or bonds;

- **accused over questions about their Law** Acts 23:6-9; 18:15; 24:5,6,10-21; 25:19,20
- **but under no accusation deserving death** Acts 25:7,8,11,25; 26:31
- [Video of Paul's transfer to Caesarea](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### CLAUDIUS LYSIAS SAYS "IT'S A JEWISH THING"

**And I found him to be accused over questions about their Law, but under no accusation deserving death or imprisonment** - Literally, "having no accusation (or crime) worthy of death or of bonds." As one reads Luke's account it becomes apparent that every Roman magistrate before whom Paul was brought declared him innocent of any crime.

**Robertson** - Lysias thus expresses the opinion that Paul ought to be set free and the lenient treatment that Paul received in Caesarea and Rome (first imprisonment) is probably due to this report of Lysias. Every Roman magistrate before whom Paul appears declares him innocent (Gallio, Lysias, Felix, Festus).

**Stedman** notes that this letter is "also virtually a letter of acquittal for any serious charge against the apostle. The garrison commander goes on record in black and white that as far as he can determine Paul has done nothing that is worthy of death or even imprisonment. And so he prepares the way for Paul to appear before the governor, laying the groundwork for careful handling of his case. **This is evidence of that marvelous, amazing hand of God, which can work through non-Christians, non-believers, anyone, to accomplish his will and purpose without their even being aware that they are being used in any way. He simply works through the normal reactions and feelings of the persons involved.."** ([Sermon](#))

**Barton** - Notice, too, that Claudius is another prosecutor of the messengers of the gospel who completely exonerated Paul, a theme Luke wanted to bring out in his record. Gallo, the mayor of Ephesus, had done so (Acts 18:14-15); the Pharisees before Felix could not make the case against Paul (Acts 23:9); Festus and Agrippa in the chapters ahead would find Paul innocent as well (Acts 26:31-32) (Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts)

**Questions** ([2213](#)) ([zetema](#) from [zeteo](#) = to seek) refers to something sought, questioned or inquired about, especially controversial questions. In the NT only in Acts and is used for a controversial issue such as the "question" of whether circumcision was necessary to salvation (Acts 15:1,2), questions about the Law (Acts 23:29), and questions with respect to whether or not Jesus was raised from the dead (Acts 25:19).

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**Acts 23:30 "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."**

KJV Acts 23:30 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.

NET Acts 23:30 When I was informed there would be a plot against this man, I sent him to you at once, also ordering his accusers to state their charges against him before you.

GNT Acts 23:30 μηνυθε σης ὁ μοι πιβουλ ς ε ς τ ν νδρα σεσθαι ξαυτ ς πεμψα πρ ς σ παραγγε λας κα το ς κατηγ ροι ς λ γειν [τ ] πρ ς α τ ν π σο .

NLT Acts 23:30 But when I was informed of a plot to kill him, I immediately sent him on to you. I have told his accusers to bring their charges before you."

KJV Acts 23:30 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.

ESV Acts 23:30 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."

CSB Acts 23:30 When I was informed that there was a plot against the man, I sent him to you right away. I also ordered his accusers to state their case against him in your presence.

NIV Acts 23:30 When I was informed of a plot to be carried out against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also ordered his accusers to present to you their case against him.

NAB Acts 23:30 Since it was brought to my attention that there will be a plot against the man, I am sending him to you at once, and have also notified his accusers to state (their case) against him before you."

NKJ Acts 23:30 And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him. Farewell.

NJB Acts 23:30 Acting on information that there was a conspiracy against the man, I hasten to send him to you, and have notified his accusers that they must state their case against him in your presence.'

GWN Acts 23:30 Since I was informed that there was a plot against this man, I immediately sent him to you. I have also ordered his accusers to state their case against him in front of you.

NRS Acts 23:30 When I was informed 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. "

YLT Acts 23:30 and a plot having been intimated to me against this man -- about to be of the Jews -- at once I sent unto thee, having given command also to the accusers to say the things against him before thee; be strong.'

- **When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man** Acts 24:7,8; 25:5,6
- **Farewell** (Only in the KJV - Textus Receptus) - Acts 15:29; 2 Cor 13:11
- [Video of Paul's transfer to Caesarea](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man-** "It being revealed to me."

**Informed** ([3377](#)) ([menuo](#)) means to make known, reveal (Lk 20:37), to report (Jn 11:57) or to inform (1 Cor 10:28, Acts 23:30). BDAG says the idea is "to offer information presumed to be of special interest." Liddell-Scott adds "to disclose what is secret, reveal, betray, generally, to make known, declare, indicate. At Athens to inform, lay public information against another. In the passive voice also of persons, to be informed against, to be denounced. "

**Gilbrant - Mēnuō** is related to the noun mēnuma meaning "information, indication." In pre-Bible usage the verb mēnuō is used to "report" runaway slaves, "report" military requisitions or secrets, and "report" items important to a king. It can also mean the "revealing" of information that is secret or within a person (cf. Liddell-Scott). The word also appears in the Septuagint, Josephus, and Philo. Mēnuō occurs only in the Maccabean writings of the Septuagint. "To inform" is the basic sense (2 Maccabees 3:7), but it can have strong negative overtones (2 Maccabees 6:11, "betrayed"; 14:37, "denounced"). Mēnuō occurs four times in the New Testament. In Luke 20:37 it refers to the "showing, appearing, revealing" of God in the burning bush to Moses. In John 11:57 the

Pharisees and chief priests commanded that anyone who knew where Jesus was should "show" Him to them. In Acts 23:30 a plot against Paul was "reported" or "revealed" to him. And in 1 Corinthians 10:28 the emphasis is upon a sacrifice that is "declared" or "made known." In each of the above occurrences the knowledge has a value that is desired or striven for. The action is not merely knowing as in ginōskō (1091), but the acquisition or declaration of something valued, desired, or striven for.

**Menuo** - informed(2), report(1), showed(1). Lk. 20:37; Jn. 11:57; Acts 23:30; 1 Co. 10:28

**Plot** (1917)(**epiboule** from **epi** = against + **boule** = design, purpose) means a scheme, plot or conspiracy. **Louw-Nida** = "a plan for treacherous activity against someone." **BDAG** = "a secret plan to do something evil or cause harm."

**Epiboule** - Acts 9:24; Acts 20:3; Acts 20:19; Acts 23:30

**I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you.**"- "the things against him." "grievances," or "charges,"

**Instructing** (3853)(**paraggello** from **para** = beside + **aggelos** = messenger) means to hand on or pass on an announcement from one to another who is at one's side, such as to what must be done, usually with the idea of a command or charge as with a military command which demanded that the subordinate obey the order from the superior and required unhesitating and unqualified obedience. (cp Lk 5:14, 8:29, Lk 9:21KJV, Acts 1:4, 4:18; 5:28KJV; Acts 15:5KJV; 1Th 4:11). It is like a mandate (an authoritative command) or a call to obedience from one in authority.

**Accusers** (2725)(**kategoros** from **kata** = against + **agoreuo** = to speak) describes one who spoke openly against another, to charge with some fault, offence, crime, etc. Only use in Septuagint in Pr 18:17.

**Gilbrant** - From the time of Sophocles and Herodotus (Fifth Century B.C.), Greek writings contain this noun to refer to an **accuser** or **betrayor**." The Septuagint translation of Proverbs 18:17 uses the term of the righteous man who **accuses** himself at the outset of his defense, but later his adversary is reproved. While this is the literal reading of the verse, it is possible that it speaks of a person who considers himself righteous at the outset, but later testimony proves otherwise. The only occurrences of katēgoros in the New Testament are in the Book of Acts and in Johanine writings (LATTER ONLY IN TEXTUS RECEPTUS). Luke used this word several times to identify the various **accusers** of Paul: Lysias, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa (Acts 23:30,35; 24:8; 25:16,18). In John 8:9KJV Jesus asked the woman caught in adultery (by men who abandoned her after "being convicted by their own conscience"), "Woman, where are those thine accusers?" (John 8:10). In a manner reminiscent of Job (Job 1:9-11) and Zechariah (Zech 3:1), John recorded the voice from heaven that called Satan the "accuser (NAS has "kategor"; KJV - verb **kategoreo**) of our brethren" (Revelation 12:10KJV).

**Kategoros** - Acts 23:30; Acts 23:35; Acts 24:8; Acts 25:16; Acts 25:18

**Robertson** says **before you** (epi sou) is as "Common idiom for "in the presence of" when before a judge (like Latin *apud*) as in Acts 24:20-21; Acts 25:26; Acts 26:2. What happened to the forty conspirators we have no way of knowing. Neither they nor the Jews from Asia are heard of more during the long five years of Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea and Rome." (**ED**: Perhaps they died of starvation since they failed to accomplish their objective to kill Paul! If the traditions of the Jewish Mishnah were held at this time there was provision for a sacrifice or offering to atone for the failure to keep a vow. Thus, there may have been over 40 extra sacrifices brought to the temple that day.)

**Acts 23:31 So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.**

KJV Acts 23:31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris.

NET Acts 23:31 So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him to Antipatris during the night.

GNT Acts 23:31 Ο μ ν ο ν στρατι ται κατ τ διατεταγμ νον α το ς ναλαβ ντες τ ν Πα λον γαγον δι νυκτ ς ε ς τ ν νπιπατρ δα,

NLT Acts 23:31 So that night, as ordered, the soldiers took Paul as far as Antipatris.

ESV Acts 23:31 So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.

CSB Acts 23:31 Therefore, the soldiers took Paul during the night and brought him to Antipatris as they were

ordered.

NIV Acts 23:31 So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris.

NAB Acts 23:31 So the soldiers, according to their orders, took Paul and escorted him by night to Antipatris.

NKJ Acts 23:31 Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.

NJB Acts 23:31 The soldiers carried out their orders; they took Paul and escorted him by night to Antipatris.

GWN Acts 23:31 So the infantrymen did as they had been ordered. They took Paul to the city of Antipatris during the night.

NRS Acts 23:31 So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him during the night to Antipatris.

YLT Acts 23:31 Then, indeed, the soldiers according to that directed them, having taken up Paul, brought him through the night to Antipatris,

- **in accordance with their orders** Acts 23:23,24; Luke 7:8; 2 Ti 2:3,4
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Video of Paul's transfer to Caesarea](#)
- [Watch Acts video of Paul's transfer to Caesarea](#)

## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

**So** (men oun) is a **term of conclusion**. Luke completes his account of Paul's transfer from Jerusalem to Caesarea.

**The soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night** - Talk about security measures! One night Paul spends with Jesus. Now he is guarded by Roman soldiers. Do you think Paul was anxious about anything at this point?

**Toussaint** - The terrain from Jerusalem to Lydda or Joppa (modern-day Lod; cf. Acts 9:32-43), seven or eight miles before Antipatris, was difficult and would provide suitable cover for an ambush party. (The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

**Soldiers** (4757) (**stratiotes** from **stratia** = an army, cp **strateuomai** = to make war) in the majority of NT uses refers to a man (or men) engaged in military service; one whose occupation is military; a man enlisted for service in an army; a private, or one in the ranks. Stratiotes is used metaphorically in 2Ti 2:3. Surprisingly stratiotes is not used in the Septuagint.

**Orders** (1299) (**diasso** from **dia** = through + **tasso** = order) means literally to arrange thoroughly, to arrange in its proper order, to issue orderly and detailed instructions as to what must be done. To command (with the implication of setting in order) as did Emperor Claudius' "commanding" that Jews must leave Rome (Acts 18:2, cp Lk 3:13).

**To Antipatris** - Antipatris was built by Herod the Great in honor of his father **Antipater**. The Romans had located a Roman colony there, so it was a convenient and safe place for the Roman soldiers to stop and spend the rest of the night. The exact location of this town is unknown. This would have been a difficult ride for they had to cover 40 miles under the cover of darkness. And remember some were foot soldiers so this would have been an intense march. At least it would have been downhill all the way. It was mentioned several times by Josephus ([Ant. 13.390](#); [Josephus Wars 1.99](#))

**Keener** adds "Troops were able and trained to undertake all-night marches when necessary, as Josephus testifies." (Ibid)

**Acts 23:32 But the next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the barracks.**

KJV Acts 23:32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:

NET Acts 23:32 The next day they let the horsemen go on with him, and they returned to the barracks.

GNT Acts 23:32 τ ὁ παριον σαυτες το ς πιπε ς π ρχεσθαι σ ν α τ π στρεψαν ε ς τ ν παρεμβολ ν·

NLT Acts 23:32 They returned to the fortress the next morning, while the mounted troops took him on to Caesarea.

KJV Acts 23:32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:

ESV Acts 23:32 And on the next day they returned to the barracks, letting the horsemen go on with him.

CSB Acts 23:32 The next day, they returned to the barracks, allowing the cavalry to go on with him.

NIV Acts 23:32 The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks.

NAB Acts 23:32 The next day they returned to the compound, leaving the horsemen to complete the journey with him.

NKJ Acts 23:32 The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks.

NJB Acts 23:32 Next day they left the mounted escort to go on with him and returned to the fortress.

GWN Acts 23:32 They returned to their barracks the next day and let the soldiers on horseback travel with Paul.

NRS Acts 23:32 The next day they let the horsemen go on with him, while they returned to the barracks.

YLT Acts 23:32 and on the morrow, having suffered the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the castle;

## THE PARTY BREAKS UP

**But the next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the barracks** - They obviously concluded the greatest danger to Paul's life was now past and sent the 200 foot soldiers and the 200 spearmen back to Jerusalem. Paul would travel this last 20-25 on horse accompanied by 70 horsemen, a journey that would take less than a day, so that if they began at daybreak (cf "the next day"), they would have arrived before "high noon." (cf the famous western [High Noon](#))

As an aside one wonders how many of these Roman soldiers we will see in heaven? You have to believe Paul did not waste a precious second in sharing the Good News that would ultimately decide his hearer's eternal destiny!

**MacArthur** notes that "Antipatris marked the border between Judea and the largely Gentile region of Samaria. The danger of ambush was now greatly reduced, and the cavalry escort would suffice to see Paul safely to Caesarea." (Ibid)

**Barclay** - It was 60 miles from Jerusalem to Caesarea and **Antipatris** was 25 miles from Caesarea. Up to Antipatris the country was dangerous and inhabited by Jews; after that the country was open and flat, quite unsuited for any ambush and largely inhabited by Gentiles. So at **Antipatris** the main body of the troops went back and left the cavalry alone as a sufficient escort.

**Acts 23:33 When these had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.**

KJV Acts 23:33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

NET Acts 23:33 When the horsemen came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.

GNT Acts 23:33 ο τινες εσελθντες ες τν Καισρειαν και ναδντες τν πιστολν τ γεμνι παρστησαν και τν Παλον ατ.

NLT Acts 23:33 When they arrived in Caesarea, they presented Paul and the letter to Governor Felix.

ESV Acts 23:33 When they had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him.

CSB Acts 23:33 When these men entered Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.

NIV Acts 23:33 When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him.

NAB Acts 23:33 When they arrived in Caesarea they delivered the letter to the governor and presented Paul to him.

NKJ Acts 23:33 When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.

NJB Acts 23:33 On arriving at Caesarea the escort delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him.

GWN Acts 23:33 When the soldiers arrived in the city of Caesarea with Paul, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him.

NRS Acts 23:33 When they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him.

YLT Acts 23:33 those having entered into Caesarea, and delivered the letter to the governor, did present also Paul to him.

- **delivered... presented** Acts 28:16
- [Video of Paul's transfer to Caesarea](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **THE LETTER AND THE PRISONER PRESENTED TO FELIX**

**When these had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter ([epistole](#)) to the governor, they also presented ([paristemi](#)) Paul to him.**

**Robert Girard** said, "God was using everything from theological arrogance to family loyalty to religious hatred to military power to Roman justice to spiritual vision, as he moved his witness to where He could use him best."

**Jack Andrews** - God had an unseen shield around His servant—He used the physical presence of the Roman soldiers to transport Paul to Caesarea. Paul was on his way to Rome! When God takes us to where He wants us to be it is often through: hard times, tough trials, dark nights, uncertain days, and by an increasing faith and trust in Him. (Ibid)

**Governor** (2232)(**hegemon** from [hegeomai](#) = to lead, rule) refers to one holding high office, especially in a preeminent position - thus a ruler, a prince, a leader (MT 2.6); as a Roman imperial provincial officer governor (MT 10.18) Used generally as a term for a prefect, proconsul, legate or procurator (Matt. 10:18; Mark 13:9; Luke 21:12; 1 Pet. 2:14). Hegemon used in the NT of prefects, procurators, of Judea: Pilate (Matt. 27:2, 11, 14, 15, 21, 23, 27; 28:14; Luke 20:20); Felix (Acts 23:24, 26, 33, 34; 24:1, 10); Festus (Acts 26:30).

**Gilbrant** - In **classical Greek** a **hēgēmōn** was a "guide" who showed one the way or "one who did a thing first." It might also be a "leader" in the army of a chief or king. Josephus used the word to describe a "procurator" or "prefect" (Antiquities 18.3.1). In the **Septuagint** **hēgēmōn** most often translates the Hebrew 'allūph, "chief" or "leader" (Genesis 36:15; Exodus 15:15; 1 Chronicles 1:51; Psalm 55:13), or sar, "officer" (Jeremiah 38:17; 39:3 [46:3]) or "commander" (Jeremiah 40:7). In the New Testament this word is often translated "**governor**" with reference to Pontius Pilate, the **procurator** of Judea. Hēgēmōn also means a "prince" (Matthew 2:6). A derivative, hēgeomai (2216), means "to lead or guide." Technically in Roman affairs the procurator collected taxes for the imperium, but in some instances, of which Judea was one, he was entrusted with administrative and magisterial powers with sole power over life and death (cf. John 19:10). (Ibid)

See **Wikipedia** article for discussion of [Roman procurator](#).

**Vine** - **hegemon** is a term used (a) for "rulers" generally, Mark 13:9; 1 Pet. 2:14; translated "princes" (i.e., leaders) in Matt. 2:6; (b) for the Roman procurators, referring, in the Gospels to Pontius Pilate, e.g., Matt. 27:2; Luke 20:20 (so designated by Tacitus, Annals, XV. 44); to Felix, Acts 23:26. Technically the procurator was a financial official under a proconsul or propretor, for collecting the imperial revenues, but entrusted also with magisterial powers for decisions of questions relative to the revenues. In certain provinces, of which Judea was one (the procurator of which was dependent on the legate of Syria), he was the general administrator and supreme judge, with sole power of life and death. Such a governor was a person of high social standing. Felix, however, was an ex-slave, a freedman, and his appointment to Judea could not but be regarded by the Jews as an insult to the nation. The headquarters of the governor of Judea was Caesarea, which was made a garrison town.

**Hegemon** - 19x in 18v - governor(14), governor's(1), governors(4).

Matt. 10:18; Matt. 27:2; Matt. 27:11; Matt. 27:14; Matt. 27:15; Matt. 27:21; Matt. 27:27; Matt. 28:14; Mk. 13:9; Lk. 20:20; Lk. 21:12; Acts 23:24; Acts 23:26; Acts 23:33; Acts 24:1; Acts 24:10; Acts 26:30; 1 Pet. 2:14

## Hegemon in Septuagint -

Gen. 36:15; Gen. 36:16; Gen. 36:17; Gen. 36:18; Gen. 36:19; Gen. 36:21; Gen. 36:29; Gen. 36:30; Gen. 36:40; Gen. 36:41; Gen. 36:42; Gen. 36:43; Exod. 15:15; 1 Chr. 1:51; 1 Chr. 1:52; 1 Chr. 1:53; 1 Chr. 1:54; Job 42:17; Ps. 55:13; Ps. 68:27; Jer. 38:17; Jer. 39:3; Jer. 40:7; Jer. 40:13; Jer. 41:11; Jer. 41:13; Jer. 41:16; Jer. 42:1; Jer. 42:8; Jer. 43:4; Jer. 43:5; Jer. 51:23; Jer. 51:57; Ezek. 23:23

### Acts 23:34 When he had read it, he asked from what province he was, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia,

KJV Acts 23:34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia;

learned that he was from Cilicia,

GNT Acts 23:34 ναγνο ς δ κα περωτ σας κ πο ασ παρχε ασ στ ν, κα πυθ μενος τι π Κιλικ ασ,

NLT Acts 23:34 He read it and then asked Paul what province he was from. "Cilicia," Paul answered.

KJV Acts 23:34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia;

ESV Acts 23:34 On reading the letter, he asked what province he was from. And when he learned that he was from Cilicia,

CSB Acts 23:34 After he read it, he asked what province he was from. So when he learned he was from Cilicia,

NIV Acts 23:34 The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia,

NAB Acts 23:34 When he had read it and asked to what province he belonged, and learned that he was from Cilicia,

NKJ Acts 23:34 And when the governor had read it, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that he was from Cilicia,

NJB Acts 23:34 When he had read it, he asked Paul what province he came from. Learning that he was from Cilicia he said,

GWN Acts 23:34 After the governor had read the letter, he asked Paul which province he was from. When he found out that Paul was from the province of Cilicia,

NRS Acts 23:34 On reading the letter, he asked what province he belonged to, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia,

YLT Acts 23:34 And the governor having read it, and inquired of what province he is, and understood that he is from Cilicia;

- **he asked** Acts 25:1; Esther 1:1; 8:9; Daniel 2:49; 6:1; Luke 23:6
- **Cilicia** Acts 15:41; 21:39
- [Video of Paul's transfer to Caesarea](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## FELIX PRELIMINARY QUESTION TO PAUL

Jesus had prophesied of events like this when he told His disciples "be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them." (Mark 13:9)

**When he had read ([anaginosko](#)) it, he asked ([eperotao](#)) from what province he was, and when he learned ([punthanomai](#)) that he was from [Cilicia](#) ([See map](#))** - Felix asked Paul what province he was from to make sure he fell under Felix's jurisdiction which must have included Cilicia.

**Wikipedia** - An imperial province was a [Roman province](#) during the [Principate](#) where the [Roman Emperor](#) had the sole right to



appoint the governor (*legatus Augusti*). These provinces were often the strategically located border provinces. (See [Cilicia](#))

**Stanley Toussaint** has an interesting note - Evidently a case could be tried in the province of the accused or in the province in which his alleged crime took place. The question actually involved "what sort of (poias) province" Paul was from. At this time Cilicia was not a full province but was under the legate of Syria, for whom Felix was a deputy. The legate would not want to be bothered with such a small case as this. Furthermore, Felix would not want to incur the Jews' wrath by forcing them to present their case against Paul in his hometown Tarsus, a city so far away. Felix could make only one decision and that was to hear the case. But witnesses against Paul would have to be present (cf. Acts 23:30). (The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

**Keener** - It was good protocol to check the jurisdiction to which a person belonged before deciding a case. Officials had the authority to try the accused, wherever he might be from, for crimes committed in their region of jurisdiction; but the reverse was also true, and it would be easier for Felix to expel Paul from his own region than to take time to try him. Some ancient writers liked to draw parallels between related historical figures; here, cf. Luke 23:6-9. Cilicia was an imperial province, the capital of which was Tarsus. But during Paul's period (not, however, Luke's period), Cilicia was governed as part of Syria. The Syrian legate had too much territory to concern himself with a relatively minor case, so Felix assumes jurisdiction he might otherwise have deferred. Hearings for Roman citizens arraigned on capital charges required painstaking examination, if Felix were to follow the law. (The IVP Bible Background Commentary – New Testament)

**Ray Stedman** notes that "There were two kinds of provinces in the Roman Empire: There were those under the control of the Roman senate, and those which reported to the emperor ([See map from 117 AD of these two types of provinces](#) - note Cilicia just above the island of Cyprus) -- the imperial provinces. He learns that Paul is from Cilicia which, like Judea, is an imperial province under the direct control of the emperor himself, responsible to him. And so the steps are being laid, as God is operating behind the scenes to pave the way, for bringing Paul and the emperor, Nero, face to face. God is going to accomplish it his way." These are his wheels within wheels (Ezekiel 1:15-21) by which he manipulates human history. It might not look as if God were involved at all, and yet all these incidents are occurring at his command, accomplishing his purposes. The striking thing from this part of the story is that God has no trouble handling history. That is no problem. He can work out his will through human events without any difficulty whatsoever. Even stubborn, obstinate, resistant, rebellious people can be used by God to bring people to where he wants them and to do what he wants done. But what gives him grief and heartache is when his own people resist his will and stubbornly determine to have something which God has said it is not time for yet. They are the ones who halt and limit the program of God. As long as the hearts of his people are right, before him, he has no difficulty. It is only when, because of an overwhelming desire for our own way, we step out of his purposes that we find ourselves in conflict with the movement of history and, like the apostle, suffer hurt and limitation as a result. And, you know, since I have been studying this through, I have to tell you that every day I must say to myself, "Look, Stedman, you can fall, too. You can miss God's will. You can get so intent on something that you think is right, and press and push for it so hard, that you too can miss the will of God." My heart's cry is that God will keep me from that. And I hope that you are praying that way, too. Be alert, be sensitive to the warning of the Holy Spirit, so that you may always walk in his purposes. ([Acts 22:30-23:35 Love That Never Lets Go](#))

**Acts 23:35 he said, "I will give you a hearing after your accusers arrive also," giving orders for him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.**

KJV Acts 23:35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

NET Acts 23:35 he said, "I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive too." Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod's palace.

GNT Acts 23:35 Διακο σομα σου, φη, των κα ο κατ γορο σου παραγ νωνται· κελε σας ν τ πραιτωρ το ρ δου φυλ σσεσθα α τ ν.

NLT Acts 23:35 "I will hear your case myself when your accusers arrive," the governor told him. Then the governor ordered him kept in the prison at Herod's headquarters.

ESV Acts 23:35 he said, "I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive." And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's praetorium.

CSB Acts 23:35 he said, "I will give you a hearing whenever your accusers get here too." And he ordered that he be kept under guard in Herod's palace.

NIV Acts 23:35 he said, "I will hear your case when your accusers get here." Then he ordered that Paul be

kept under guard in Herod's palace.

NAB Acts 23:35 he said, "I shall hear your case when your accusers arrive." Then he ordered that he be held in custody in Herod's praetorium.

NKJ Acts 23:35 he said, "I will hear you when your accusers also have come." And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

NJB Acts 23:35 'I will hear your case as soon as your accusers are here too.' Then he ordered him to be held in Herod's praetorium.

GWN Acts 23:35 he said, "I'll hear your case when your accusers arrive." Then the governor gave orders to keep Paul under guard in Herod's palace.

NRS Acts 23:35 he said, "I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive." Then he ordered that he be kept under guard in Herod's headquarters.

YLT Acts 23:35 'I will hear thee -- said he -- when thine accusers also may have come;' he also commanded him to be kept in the praetorium of Herod.

- **I will give you a hearing after your accusers arrive also** Acts 23:30; 24:1,10,22,24-27; 25:16
- **giving orders for him to be kept in** Mt 2:1,3,16
- **Herod's Praetorium** Mt 27:27; John 18:28
- [Video of Paul's transfer to Caesarea](#)
- [Video of Paul before Felix](#)
- [Acts 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## I WILL HEAR YOUR CASE

**I will give you a hearing after your accusers** ([kategoros](#) also v30) **arrive also** - **I will give you a hearing** is the verb **diakouo** (only here in NT) and it was a legal technical term meaning to give someone an opportunity to be heard in court or to provide a legal hearing.

**Giving orders** ([keleuo](#)) **for him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium** - The Praetorium was the lavish palace built by Herod the Great which served as the capitol building as well as the official residence of the Roman procurators.

**Andrews** notes that "Paul went from the barracks in Jerusalem to the palace in Caesarea! God was working to take care of His faithful servant! God was a shield for His servant!"

**Kept** (5442) ([phulasso](#)) means to watch, to carry out the function as a military guard or sentinel (cp Acts 23:35, 28:16), to keep watch, to have one's eye upon lest one escape, to guard a person that he might remain safe (from violence, from another person or thing, from being snatched away, from being lost). This verb indicates Paul was kept under guard meaning he was closely watched but not necessarily locked in a cell or chained to a soldier (because he had not been charged with any crime).

**Praetorium** (governor's palace) ([See diagram & model](#)) (4232) ([praitorion](#) from Latin **praetorium**) refers to a detachment of soldiers serving as the palace guard. Praetorium was originally the praetor's tent in camp, with its surroundings.

**Wikipedia** on [praetorium](#) - The [Latin](#) term **praetorium** — or **praetorium** or **pretorium** — originally signified a general's tent within a Roman [castra](#), [castellum](#), or encampment. It derived from the name of one of the chief [Roman magistrates](#), the [praetor](#). *Praetor* (Latin, "leader") was originally the title of the highest-ranking civil servant in the [Roman Republic](#), but later became a position directly below the rank of [consul](#).

**David Thompson** - I have wondered what happened to the zealots who took the vow. Remember, they promised they would not eat or drink until Paul was dead. Well the next day they probably started to get hungry and thirsty and Paul was very much alive. This shows you the folly of religious zeal that is not of God. They change things as they go. Now what did Paul do that caused this mess? He preached grace salvation to a religious world that loves works. ([Sermon](#))

**John MacArthur**- God's providential protection of His servant demonstrates His faithfulness. Based in part on his own experiences, Paul could declare to the Corinthians that "God is faithful" (1 Cor. 1:9; cf. 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18; 2 Thess. 3:3). The first step in that direction occurred the day after God's promise to bring Paul to Rome. He also showed His care for Paul by sovereignly providing a safe and comfortable trip to Caesarea and providing the best of accommodations when he arrived there. Paul experienced the truth expressed by Peter: "Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). (MacArthur New Testament

**Guzik** - This began a two-year period of confinement for Paul in Caesarea. After that he spent at least two years in Rome. Taken together with travel time, the next five years of Paul's life were lived in Roman custody. This was a striking contrast to his previous years of wide and spontaneous travel.. Paul lived many years with great freedom, and had to trust the promises of God through those years. Yet he also had to trust the promises of Jesus in his years of little freedom – and to know that God could work just as powerfully through those more difficult circumstances.i. Paul needed to receive the promise of Jesus – both promises from 20 years before, and promises recently made – to receive them with confident faith, allowing those promises to make a difference in how he thought and even felt. Every believer must do the same. (Enduring Word Bible Commentary – Acts)

**Jack Andrews** - There are many times in life when everything is “out of our hands” and we just have to trust the Lord. That is a good place to be seeing that we should always trust the Lord! (Ibid)

**Jack Arnold** sums up this chapter noting that "We see, through the life of Paul, how God manipulated human history. It might not look like God is involved at all, and yet all events occurred at His command, accomplishing His purpose. Most of history is God supernaturally working through what appears to be natural to us. God has no problem handling history. He can work out His will through human events, big or small, without any difficulty at all. Even stubborn, obstinate, resistant and rebellious people are used by God to get people where He wants them and to do what He wants done in this world. Yet, through it all, man feels and senses he is acting freely. This is the mystery of history." For you who are not Christians, you should know that God has a plan which includes who will go to heaven and who will go to hell. Yet, in this plan, God has established secondary causes as surely as He has established the plan. These secondary causes are the spreading of the gospel, prayer, witnessing, faith, repentance and a moving of the human will towards Christ. God, based on His own character, promises to save every man who will by an act of his will trust Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. Use the means that God has provided in His plan. Repent, exercise faith, will to come to Christ. If you will come to Christ, you will learn that your whole salvation was part of the plan of God. Trust Christ and then you will come to understand that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.

**Warren Wiersbe** - As you review the events recorded in this chapter, you cannot help but be impressed with the commitment of the Apostle Paul to his calling. "None of these things move me!" (Acts 20:24) If ever a man dared to follow Christ, come what may, he was that man. Paul did not look for the easy way but for the way that would most honor the Lord and win the lost. He was even willing to become a prisoner if that would further the work of the Gospel. You are also impressed with the amazing providence of God in caring for His servant. "The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them" (Ps. 34:7, NKJV). "Let us trust in God, and be very courageous for the Gospel," wrote Charles Spurgeon, "and the Lord Himself will screen us from all harm." God's people can afford to be daring, in the will of God, because they know their Saviour will be dependable and work out His perfect will. Paul was alone—but not alone! His Lord was with him and he had nothing to fear. (Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Daring)

**Andrews** - Andrew Murray went through a very difficult time of trial in his life in which he wrote, “First, He brought me here, it is by His will I am in this strait place; in that face I will rest. Next, He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace to behave as His child. Then, He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow. Last, in His good time, He can bring me out again—how and when He knows. Let me say I am here: by God's appointment, in His keeping, under His training, and for His time.” God's people belong to God—we are His property and He will watch over us, take care of us, provide for us, and use us. God has not promised that life will smooth sailing— without waves. God has not promised us bright days without storms. God has not promised us an easy path without obstacles. God has not promised us care-free living without pain! God has promised to never leave us nor forsake us and to guide us. God has promised to work all things out for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. God will work even in the midst of trials and pain — He will give us strength to face the enemy—wisdom to live godly—boldness to speak His gospel!(Ibid)

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**Bruce Barton - LIFE APPLICATION GUARANTEES FOR THE GODLY** - When we get involved in God's work, like Paul, we can expect some of the divine benefits Paul experienced:

- God's Presence (Acts 23:11)—God knows how much we can take and how deep we can sink; when we are doing his work, we can expect him to "stand near" us the way he did with Paul.
- God's Protection (Acts 23:12-32)—God preserves his children for the work at hand and keeps them safe until it is time to bring them home.
- God's Platforms (Acts 23:33-35)—God will open doors to new opportunities to share the gospel in strategic situations before many kinds of people. (Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts)