

Acts 22:30-23:11

The Roman tribune, Claudius Lysias, was still trying to figure out how to handle the case of Paul, who was a Roman citizen from Tarsus. So, he still needed to identify the reason why Paul's presence had provoked a riot in the temple in Jerusalem.

Summary

In Acts 22:30-23:11, the Roman tribune, Claudias Lysias, ordered the Sanhedrin to assemble in order that the Jewish authorities might identify Paul's offenses.

1. Appropriate Respect vv. 22:30-23:5

Paul launched into his defense, asserting that he had lived his life before God in all good conscience. Though Paul was a citizen of Tarsus, of Rome, and of Israel, what mattered most, however, was how he conducted himself before the Sovereign God, who examines the conscience. Paul was not claiming to have achieved sinless perfection. In this temporal matter before the Sanhedrin, however, Paul knew, as God was his witness, that he had done nothing to provoke the riot (**Acts 24:12**).

Living before God in all good conscience amongst many other things certainly means that when a situation of conflict arises offering more than once possible choice, we choose that which brings more glory to God (**1 Thess 2:4**). In all of Paul's relationships with others, in the use of his God-given gifts, and providential opportunities, in facing any adverse circumstances, he sought to give God honor and praise (**Col 1:10**).

In every context, we are to live as though we belonged to another kingdom.

Ananias the high priest reacted immediately with a command that Paul be struck on the mouth (**Acts 23:2**).

Paul shot back a rebuke (**Acts 23:3**). Paul expected Israel's leaders to observe the demand of God's law for impartial justice, in which punishment awaits conviction on the basis of evidence (**Lev. 19:15, Deut. 25:1**). Paul's rebuke gave rise to him being rebuked from the bystanders (**Acts 23:4**).

His cause was just and his words about Ananias were true, but when the apostle learned that his retort had dishonored the office of God's high priest, he humbly repented for the way he had spoken those words (**Acts 23:5**). His apology indicates Paul's reverence for the law, the very law that he was being accused of breaking.

2. Effective Strategy vv. 23:6-10

The high priest's arrogant abuse of power persuaded Paul that he needed to spotlight the Sadducee-Pharisee disagreement over the doctrine of the resurrection in order to

show his fellow-Pharisees that his Christian convictions were a faithful extension of their understanding of Judaism.

The Sadducees said that there is no resurrection, nor angels nor spirits. The Pharisees, on the other hand, believed in a final resurrection as Israel's ultimate hope, and therefore in the personal survival of the righteous after death. This hope, which had always been Paul's as a Pharisee, found fulfillment in Jesus the risen Lord.

Although Paul had been slandered as despising the Law and defiling the temple, the central issue for Paul was the resurrection. It was this that separated him from the power bloc who controlled the temple more than anything else.

The effect was immediate division.

Chaos and noisy confusion ensued in the Jewish Sanhedrin.

Legal scholars rose to the defense of Paul, their fellow Pharisee, pronouncing him innocent of wrongdoing. They even held open the possibility that Jesus had appeared in spirit or angelic form to speak to Paul (**Acts 23:9**).

The conflict deteriorated from the verbal to the physical, to the point that the Roman tribune again feared for Paul's safety and sent in the troops to retrieve Paul again into the safety of the Fortress Antonia.

The question whether Paul had committed a crime warranting further custody still had not been answered.

3. Destination Rome vv. 23:11

In the night following the Sanhedrin debacle, the Lord Jesus came, as he had at Corinth (**Acts 18:9-10**), to comfort his downcast and weary witness (**Acts 23:11**).

For a long time, Paul had been hoping and praying to reach Rome (**Acts 19:21, Rom 1:10**), but the Spirit's predictions of suffering awaiting him in Jerusalem placed his plan in doubt (**Rom. 15:31-32**).

Now Jesus spoke his sovereign Word, which made Paul's arrival in Rome absolutely certain.

'Many dangers, toils, and snares' lay between Paul and his destination, as they do between ourselves and our heavenly home but the Lord's invincible purpose guarantees every believer's safe arrival, just as certainly as Paul would reach Rome via the surprising route of legal appeal, storm, and shipwreck.