

Readings

Scripture

^{22:30} But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them.

^{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." ² And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. 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?" ⁴ Those who stood by said, "Would you revile God's high priest?" 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.'"

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." ⁷ And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸ For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. 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?" 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.

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."
- Acts 22:30-23:11 (*English Standard Version*)

Reflection

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

- Acts 18:9-11 (*English Standard Version*)

"The commander was determined to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews. He had tried questioning the crowd, but had got different answers from them. He was about to use torture, but Paul's Roman citizenship blocked that avenue. So now he opted for a third method – trial by the Sanhedrin. The high priest Ananias was a thoroughly unsavoury character. He was described by Josephus as 'a great hoarder up of money; he even took away the tithes that belonged to the priests by violence!'"

- John Stott, *The Spirit The Church and The World: The Message of Acts* (p. 351)

Sermon Outline

New Eyes and Ears?
Acts 22:30-23:11

The Acts of the Apostles
Brad Anderson

Because we can become fearful under pressure, Jesus uses his authority to encourage us... (Acts 23:11)

In what situations do we most need the encouragement of Jesus?

In our fears related to those in governing authority... (Acts 22:30)

In our fears related to those in religious authority... (Acts 23:1-5)

In our fears related to those in supernatural authority... (Acts 23:6-9)

Reflection Questions (*taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups*)

- If you were a "prisoner of conscience", would you prefer to be tried before a secular court or a church body? Why? Where would you expect to get a fairer trial?
- Given the rumors and accusations against Paul (Acts 21:21, 28), why would the high priest react so violently to Paul's statement in Acts 23:1?
- In Acts 23:1-5, how does Paul show his respect and zeal for the Jewish law? Why does he make such a point of doing so?
- Why does Paul change the focus of attention from whether he has kept the law to his hope in the resurrection? Given the tensions on this issue between the Pharisees and Sadducees, describe what you think the next few minutes of the assembly must have been like.
- What effect does the split have on Paul's case? If you were the commander, what would you conclude after this meeting?
- Given the small probability of a fair hearing, do you think the result of this meeting is what Paul hoped for or not? Why?
- The last time we heard God speak to Paul was in Acts 18:9-10, after he had experienced a series of setbacks. How might this help Paul recall what the Lord said about him to Ananias in Acts 9:15-16?
- When facing death, what duty before God do you want to say you have fulfilled?
- How has the Lord encouraged you during hard times?
- What might be your "Rome" – the next important step in your spiritual journey? Why do you think so?