

**How did Paul start out his appearance before the Sanhedrin (v. 1)?** In a forthright and bold way. In referring to his conscience, Paul believed that nothing he had done was contrary to the will of God as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. Specifically, his Christian beliefs and conduct did not conflict with his Jewish heritage.<sup>1</sup>

**How did Ananias, the high priest, respond (v. 2)?** He was infuriated. He doubtless looked on Paul as an apostate from the Jewish religion, a renegade, a turncoat. How could one who had turned from Judaism to Christianity claim such innocence? Accordingly the high priest ordered that Paul the prisoner be slapped on the mouth.<sup>2</sup>

**What did Paul say to the high priest (v. 3)?** Paul's outburst was triggered by the high priest's illegal command. Jewish law considered a person to be innocent until proven guilty. How could the priest punish Paul before he had even been charged, much less tried and found guilty? Like a whitewashed wall, Ananias looked all right on the outside but was weak and deteriorating inwardly.<sup>3</sup> Paul's reaction was extreme, but as he proceeded to explain, it resulted from misunderstanding.

**What was the confusion (vv. 4-5)?** For some reason unknown to us, Paul had not actually realized that Ananias was the high priest. The Sanhedrin had been assembled on short notice, and perhaps Ananias was not wearing his official robes. It may even be that he was not occupying the seat customarily assigned to the high priest. Whatever the reason, Paul had not intentionally spoken evil of the high priest. He quickly apologized for his words, quoting Exodus 22:28: "Do not speak evil of a ruler of your people."<sup>4</sup>

**How did Paul change his strategy (v. 6)?** Paul recognized that he could not get a fair trial in this court, so he changed his tactics. He decided to divide the jury and began his defense again ("My brothers"). This time he took the offensive and stated his hope in the resurrection of the dead.

**What was the confusion and uproar all about (vv. 7-9)?** Paul's belief in the resurrection divided the Sanhedrin. The Sadducees denied the possibility of the resurrection, as well as the existence of angels and spirits, but the Pharisees believed in these things.

Paul's statement immediately started an argument between the Pharisees and the Sadducees (4:1-2). By using this clever tactic, Paul divided his enemy. Amazingly the Pharisees defended Paul, a fellow Pharisee.<sup>5</sup>

**What did the commander do (v. 10)?** This courtroom chaos was not exactly what the commander had in mind. He must have thrown up his hands in dismay. He was afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by these Jews. For a second time he could not discover what Paul had done or why so many Jews hated him. So he decided to take Paul into protective custody in the barracks. Paul was in more danger in the midst of his fellow Jews than he was in Roman custody.

**What clear message did the Lord convey to Paul (v. 11)?** This vision was not only one of comfort and encouragement but was also a confirmation of Paul's plans to go to Rome. The gospel of Christ would literally go from Jerusalem to Rome by means of the Apostle Paul.

**What did the Jews do the next morning (vv. 12-15)?** More than forty of them bound themselves with an oath that they would not eat or drink again until Paul was dead. Their plan was to have the chief priests and elders of Israel ask the Roman commander to return Paul to the Sanhedrin for further questioning. Assassins planned to kill him somewhere along his route.

**How was the plot thwarted (vv. 16-18)?** In the providence of God, a nephew of the apostle overheard the plot and reported it to Paul. Paul believed in taking advantage of any legitimate means to insure his safety; therefore, he reported the matter to one of the centurions. The centurion personally escorted the nephew to the commander.

**What did the commander do when he was briefed on the plot (v. 22)?** The commander took the advice of Paul's nephew seriously. He probably knew Ananias well enough to know that the high priest would go along with this assassination plot.<sup>6</sup> He ordered the nephew not to tell anyone of the plot.

**What did the commander do next (vv. 23-24)?** The commander realized that Paul's enemies would stop at nothing to see him dead. As long as Paul was in Jerusalem there was a danger of rioting which would jeopardize his job. And he did not want the assassination of a Roman citizen on his record. Consequently he prepared to send Paul to the Roman provincial capital, Caesarea, with a heavy military guard under the cover of night.

**What else did the commander do (v. 25)?** He wrote a letter to Governor Felix. When a prisoner was forwarded to a superior, the subordinate officer was required to send a copy of the background of the prisoner's case along with the prisoner himself.

**What was the message of the letter to the Governor (vv. 26-30)?** The commander identifies himself as Claudius Lysias in the letter which he wrote to the Roman governor Felix. The purpose of the letter was, of course, to explain the situation with regard to Paul. It is rather amusing to see how Claudius Lysias sought to portray himself as a hero and a defender of public righteousness but he did not include that he almost flogged Paul. He probably was extremely fearful lest it be reported to Felix that he had tied up an uncondemned Roman citizen. Fortunately for Claudius Lysias, Paul did not tattle.<sup>7</sup>

Of particular importance is the notice that in Lysias' judgment Paul was not guilty of any crime deserving death or imprisonment. In fact, every Roman magistrate before whom Paul appeared (Gallio, Lysias, Felix, and Festus) declared him innocent.<sup>8</sup>

**After their departure from Jerusalem, what happened upon their arrival at Caesarea when they appeared before Felix (vv. 33-35)?** After reading the introductory letter from the commander, Felix inquired concerning Paul's home province for the following reason: If Paul had come from a province in the empire that had its own ruler, in addition to having a Roman governor, then that local province authority had a right to witness the proceedings. Cilicia was not such a place, however, so Felix could deal with Paul himself. He needed to hear the testimony of Paul's accusers, because this was required by Roman law. Consequently Felix kept Paul in the governor's official residence, Herod's palace, until Paul's accusers had come down from Jerusalem and he could conduct a hearing. The governor's palace had cells for prisoners. Paul would have been fairly comfortable there, since he was a Roman citizen who had not even been formally charged with a crime.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2022 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 452.

<sup>2</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1654.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 419.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2022 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 461.

<sup>5</sup> Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 419.

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2022 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 458.

<sup>7</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1655.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2022 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 459.

<sup>9</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1654.