

# Day 131, Acts 23

by David Servant

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*David Servant explores Paul's trial before the Sanhedrin, highlighting his faith, prophetic words, and the impact of his imprisonment on the spread of the gospel.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 10:19

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Persevering Faith"

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## Description

David Servant delves into Paul's bold and strategic responses before the Sanhedrin, highlighting how his words were inspired by the Holy Spirit and carried deeper meanings that were often missed by his audience. Despite facing opposition and potential threats on his life, Paul remained steadfast in his faith, receiving divine assurance from the Lord and experiencing miraculous interventions to spare his life. Through Paul's trials and imprisonment, the gospel continued to spread, impacting the lives of many and emboldening believers to share the word of God without fear.

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## Transcript

Paul's opening line before the Sanhedrin certainly didn't win him any favor. It was interpreted by the high priest, Ananias, as prideful, while I suspect that Paul was simply expressing the sincerity of his faith, before and after he believed in Jesus. He wasn't claiming to be perfect or to have always obeyed his conscience, but that he had tried to be sensitive to his God-given conscience all his life. And might the consciences of the Sanhedrin have been pricked by what he said?

Paul's pointed response to the high priest's order that he be struck on the mouth similarly did not win him any favor. But it was so pointed that I suspect that it was inspired, not by his anger, but by the Holy Spirit (compare Paul's Spirit-inspired words in 13:10 for example). Remember that Jesus told his disciples not to worry about or plan what they should say when put on trial, because the Spirit would give them wise utterance at such times (Matt. 10:19-20). Thus, I believe that Paul's words were prophetic. Interestingly, about eight years later, the "whitewashed wall" was assassinated by Jewish revolutionaries. Ananias the high priest was demoted.

But did Paul, as he claimed, actually not realize that it was the high priest whom he had reviled? I don't know. I suspect, however, that his apology was a subtle way of saying, "Surely no true high priest of God would act like Ananias." It was an apology with a barb.

Paul's fourth statement before the Sanhedrin, "I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!" was another statement that carried a secondary subtle message. Paul used a figure of speech known as a "double entendre," a phrase that is intended to be understood in either of two ways. The first meaning is generally straightforward, while the second meaning is more subtle and is the truer meaning. For example, when the cannibal says to the missionary, "I'd like to have you for dinner tonight," that is a double entendre.

The real issue of Paul's trial was Christ's resurrection, and that was the more subtle meaning of his claim to be on trial "for the hope and resurrection of the dead." The Sanhedrin, however, missed that meaning, and just as Paul knew they would, interpreted his words as being his stance on a controversial doctrinal issue that divided them. Pandemonium was the result, and it seems as if that was Paul's Spirit-inspired intention, as he knew a fair trial was an impossibility. The entire episode was somewhat comical, yet the blindness of the Sanhedrin was tragic.

In light of the circumstances that were mounting against him, certainly Paul would have been tempted to think that he might soon forfeit his life. It was a time that he needed out-of-the-ordinary assurance, and the Lord granted it by personally appearing to him and assuring him he would be going to Rome (23:11). From that point on, Paul had no reason to fear, even as he learned of the plot of forty Jews to ambush and murder him.

Once again, Paul's life was providentially spared by Gentiles, in this case 200 of them carrying spears! An escort of honor indeed.

And there was more honor to come from the Gentiles. Upon his arrival in Caesarea, Roman governor Felix ordered that Paul be kept in Herod's Praetorium, an elaborate castle complex right on the Mediterranean Sea. A lovely spot! Paul would reside there for two years with considerable liberty, letting his light shine and quite possibly writing at least one letter that we have yet to read, his epistle to the Philippians. In that letter Paul wrote:

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. (Phil. 1:12-14, emphasis added).

This is why I love reading the New Testament chronologically!

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