

Acts 23:1-11

Paul speaks to the Sanhedrin



The next day, since the commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble.

Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them. Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day." At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. 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!"



Those who were standing near Paul said, "You dare to insult God's high priest?" 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.`"

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."

When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.



(The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.) 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?" 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. 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."

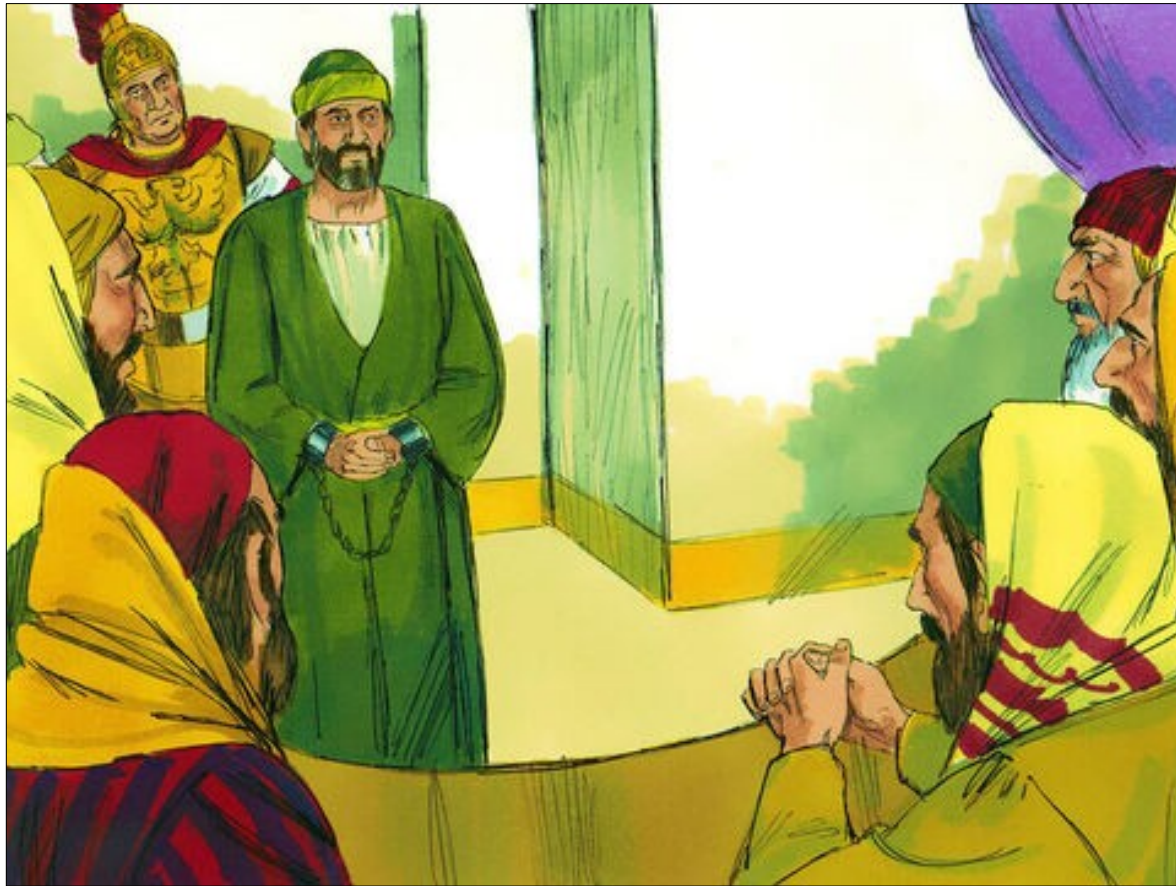


The next day, since the commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble.



What is all this about? What is behind the hostility?
Ephesians 6:12

Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.



It's a kind of trial

Paul's opportunity to declare the gospel and explain things

Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin



Confidence before authorities – fear God then no one else

*Proverbs 29:25 The fear of man lays a snare,
but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.*

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

Brothers – I'm one of you.
Not guilty

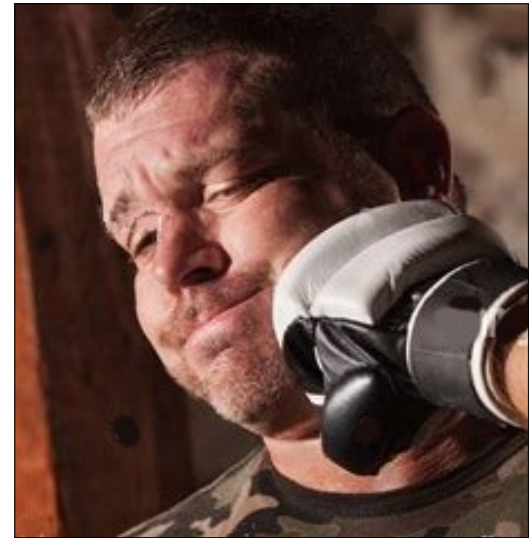
What does God want of us?
Trust and obey...



The Gift of conscience informed by God's word

At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth.

Perhaps Ananias was just annoyed and was being aggressive.
Stop him talking – “Speak when you are spoken to!”



Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall!"

A hasty reply or a robust response?

How do we respond to injustice?
He is calling Ananias a hypocrite.

John 18:23 Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?"



*Romans 12:17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil.
Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.*

You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!"

Paul's reason for his accusation
The Law has teeth – God will respond



Those who were standing near Paul said,
"You dare to insult God's high priest?"

Accused or what have you done?
Don't you know who he is?



What they call him and what he is are not the same

He may have the title, but not the heart.

Paul replied,
"Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest;

I didn't realise he was?

Why not?

Eyesight problems?

Absent from Jerusalem – not recognised him?

Irony – he doesn't behave like one



Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written..

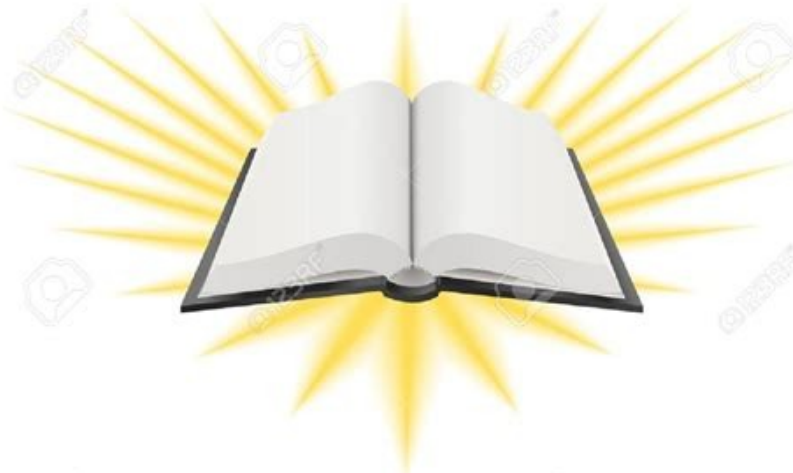
`Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.`"

He corrects himself.

The bible teaches respect for (proper) authority

Applied to the present circumstances.

*Exodus 22:28 "You shall not revile God,
nor curse a ruler of your people."*



The Bible guide to life – and the Holy Spirit's enabling

Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees,



He could he tell the difference?

Dress? The way things always were – different groups

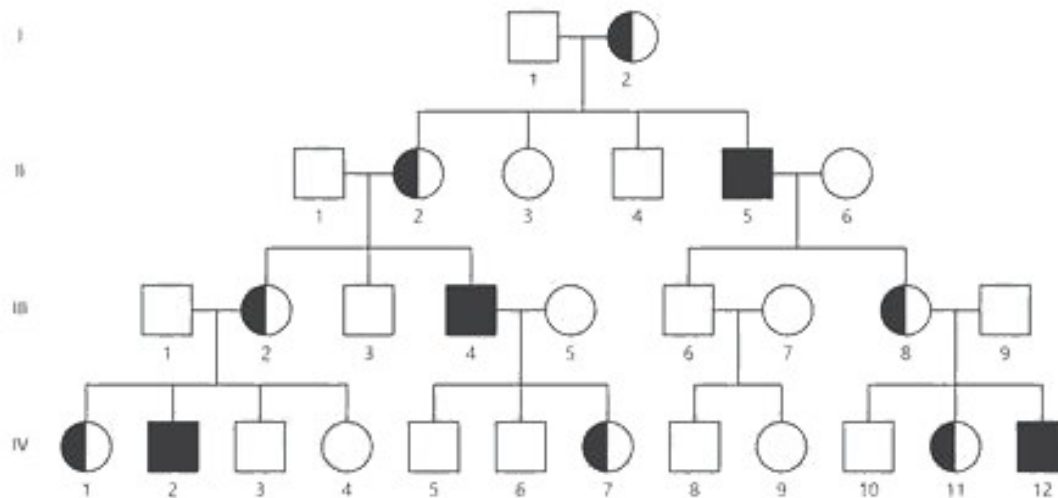
Paul called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee.(Pharisees)

What did Paul sense about the court? Hostile to him?

He loudly responds.

Brothers, a term of address (gentlemen, you?)

He has a good pedigree to some of them



Paul 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."

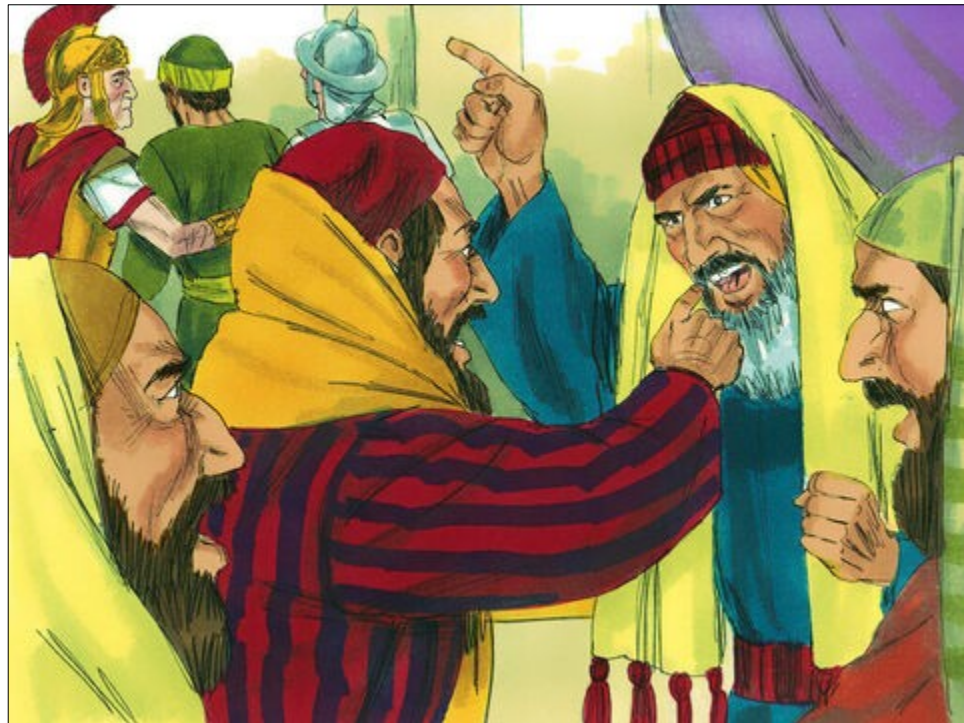
Get to main point of his message (the main distinction between the 2 groups - natural vs, supernatural)

Why I am here - I believe in the resurrection of the dead (... *and I have met One to prove it*)



When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

Pushed a button – strong disagreement/ argument in court!



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

What caused the argument?

2 main groups

Sadducees – elite priestly ruling class – more friendly to the Romans (power hungry)

More secular mind set – rejected the Bible apart from first five books - lost prophetic input

No resurrection – when you die that's it- gone forever.

No supernatural beings good or bad -although mentioned in the first 5 books



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

What caused the argument?

The other group

Pharisees

More an ordinary people group

Believed the whole Bible given by God

Strict observers of the Law + oral traditions (interpretations)

Accepted the truth of the resurrection and the activity of angels and spirits.



There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously.

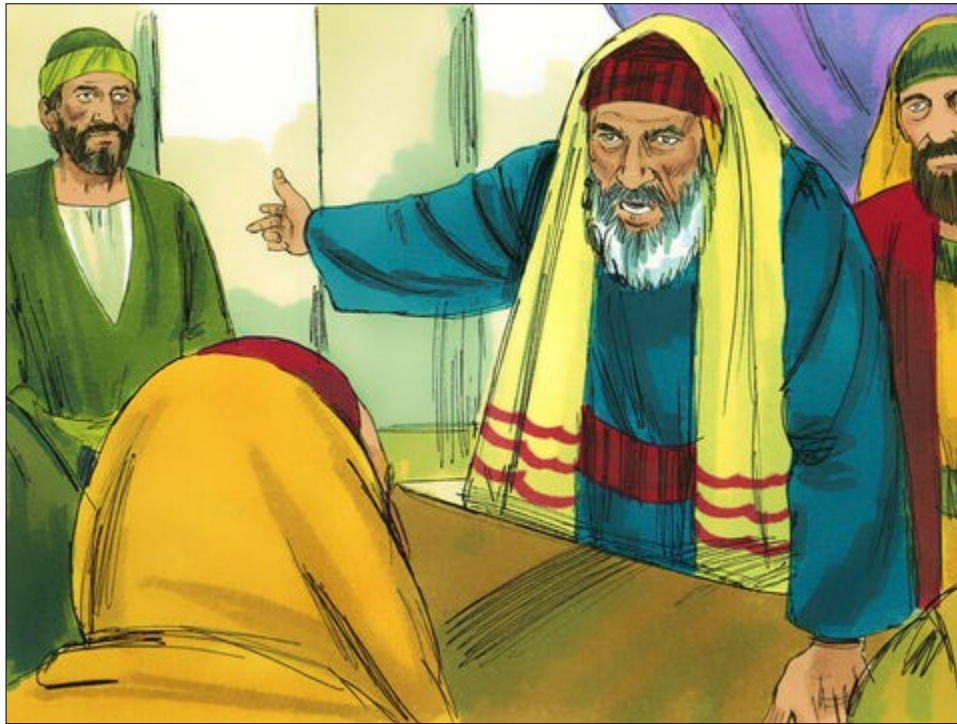
This was not a discussion but a shouting match. The experts in the Bible teaching (part of Pharisee group) want to make their point (vigorously)



The worst time to say anything is when you're angry

"We find nothing wrong with this man," they said.

Not guilty – biased judgement? – He's one of us.



"What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

Having a go at the Sadducees

What is their view of Paul's experience? They don't know it was the risen Lord Jesus, but he could tell them if given the chance.



The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them.

Trouble in Parliament!

They have taken sides regarding Paul, who is caught in the middle.

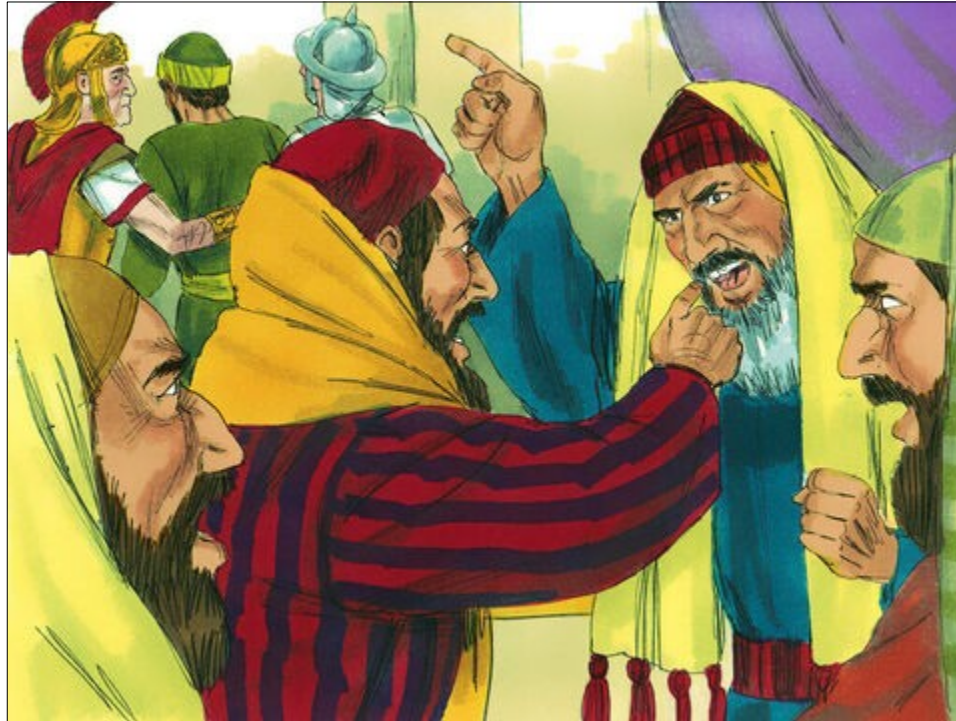


Commander – here we go again

Were the proceedings conducted in Greek or Aramaic?

Perhaps again the commander has no idea what is happening?

He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.



Get this Roman citizen out of here before he is killed

How did that go?

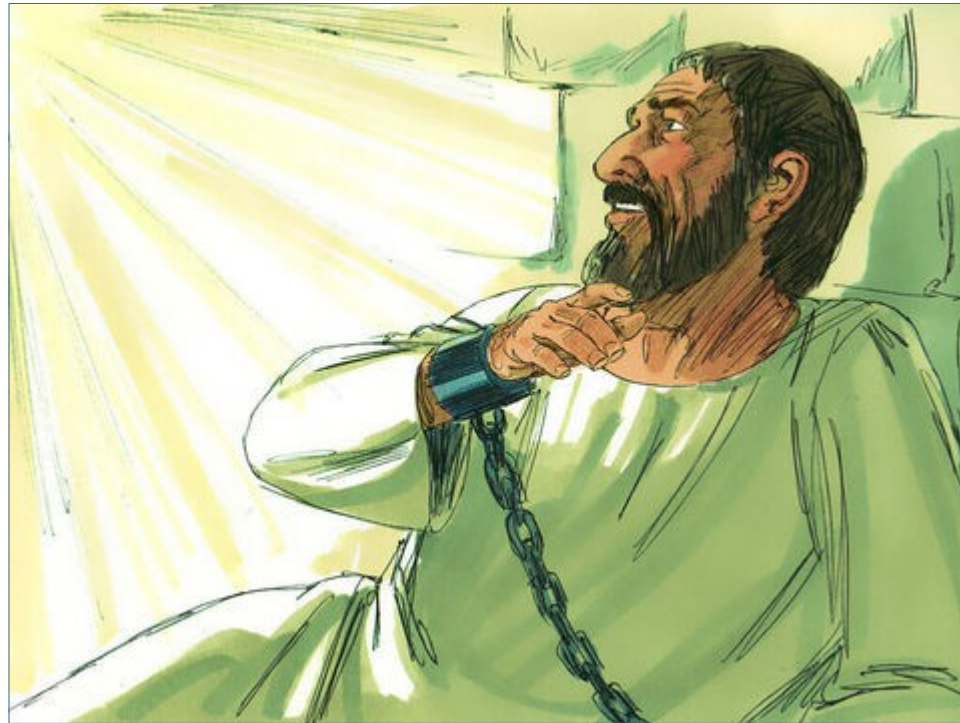
What would Paul have felt about the wasted opportunity?

Depressed?

When you have tried your best and failed?



The following night the Lord stood near Paul



A heavenly visit – I will not leave you or forsake you
Prison cannot keep Jesus out.

Was it that night or the following night? Time to think and pray?

The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said,
"Take courage! "

Blessing for now

Heart strength

No criticism – the Lord's assessment of the situation



As you have testified about me in Jerusalem,

The Lord's summary verdict on Paul's visit to Jerusalem

1, Spoken to the 'brother believers in the church'

2, Addressed the crowd at the temple

3, And tried to address the nation's leaders

You **HAVE TESTIFIED** about **ME** here



so you must also testify in Rome.

A promise from the Lord about the future
I still have more work for you to do
Testify about me in the capital of the empire

Be encouraged.



How do we cope with life's disappointments
as we seek to serve the Lord?

