

## Acts 22-Acts 23 1-24 "Be of good cheer"<sup>99</sup>

When Paul arrives in Jerusalem he visits James and the elders of the church. While on his missionary journeys, Paul refused to force the law on the Gentiles. Paul was adamant - the law should never be made a requirement for righteousness - but a Jew was still free to be Jewish, and observe the rituals out of respect.

→ **PAUL STILL SERVED THE GOD OF HIS FATHERS HE HAD NOT REJECTED JUDAISM... JUDAISM HAD REJECTED GOD... IN JESUS CHRIST,**

James suggests Paul show the Jews his own love for the law by taking a voluntary vow. James was hoping Paul's participation in a Jewish ritual would diffuse the anger among the Jews that had been generated by Paul's doctrine. The plan backfires. The mere sight of Paul in the temple triggers a riot. A mob grabs Paul, and starts to drag him out of the temple to stone him. Roman soldiers stationed in the temple rush in to restore order. The soldiers save Paul from the pack by arresting him. They carry him back to their temple precinct for protection. If I were Paul I would've been happy to escape the lynching. I'd want a quiet cell, but not Paul. No matter the situation, Paul doesn't lose sight of his purpose. He asks the captain if he can preach to the people who just tried to kill him. Too often we lose our composure in a chaotic situation. Our own survival takes precedent over God's calling. We need to be like Paul - *faithful under fire and stay the course.*

So taken into protective custody, on his way into the Fortress Antonia, Paul stopped long enough to ask Claudius Lysias permission to speak to the crowd that wanted to kill him. Surely his heart must have been pounding as he anticipated the opportunity to address the city.


We pick up the story on the steps of the Fortress as Paul addresses virtually the entire city of Jerusalem.

**Acts chapter 22...** "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now." **The Greek word translated "defense" is *apologia*, from which we get our word "apologetics." Theologically, "apologetics" means defending the faith—giving reason and rationale for the things we believe.**

2 And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said: 3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in

Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. **His defense is his testimony . . . The most powerful defense you have is your own testimony.** Revelation 12:11

*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.* 4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, 5 as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

 The message is clear: "I understand why you have attacked me. I was once an attacker also. I understand where you are coming from." Paul had been a Christian for more than 20 years, but could still relate to those who were not Christians.

6 "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. 7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' 8 So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' 9 "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. 10 So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' 11 And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of

those who were with me, I came into Damascus. **12** "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt *there*, **13** came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. **14** Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. **THE BEST A JEW CAN BE IS TO BE A <sup>bb</sup>"MESSIANIC JEW"<sup>aa</sup> ONE WHO RECEIVES JESUS AS THEIR MESSIAH!** How I pray this for you dearest Church—that you might **know His will, see His face, and hear His voice.**

**15** For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. **16** And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' **17** "Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance **18** and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' **19** So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. **20** And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' **Paul had an impressive vision of Jesus while in the temple; yet he never referred to this vision in his letters, and seems to only mention it now out of necessity. Paul's Christian life was founded on God's truth, not spiritual experiences, and he didn't even like to talk a lot about his spiritual experiences.**

**21** Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'" **Paul made it clear that it wasn't his idea to preach to the Gentiles; this was God's plan, not his.** **22** And they listened to him until this word, (what word was that? The horrible word "**Gentile**") and *then* they raised their

voices and said, "Away with such a *fellow* from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" "Blasphemy!" cried the Jews. "How dare Paul say that God sent him to the *Gentiles*. Everyone knows Gentiles are good for nothing but to keep hell hot." **one word: Gentiles.**



**Likewise, many people today are offended that "good people" must be saved the same way "sinners" are; they want a gospel that will keep them separate from the "low lifes" of society.**

23 Then, as they cried out and tore off *their* clothes and threw dust into the air, 24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him. **"Scourging" Men often died or were crippled for life after a scourging.**

25 And as they bound him with thongs, **Our Gospel exhibit had a wonderful replica of how this worked... same thing that was done to Jesus.** Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" *It was a jailable offense to even bind a Roman citizen without following proper legal procedures and a capital offense to scourge him without doing so.* 26 When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman." 27 Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes." 28 The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship. "And Paul said, "But I was born *a citizen.*" *Most historians believe Paul's father was a Jew who had been granted Roman citizenship because of some service he had given to the empire.* 29 Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a

Roman, and because he had bound him. Longenecker notes, "The verbal claim to Roman citizenship was accepted at face value; penalties for falsifying documents and making false claims of citizenship were exceedingly stiff - Epictetus speaks of death for such acts." Paul was an extremely rare individual. It was uncommon to find such an educated, intelligent, devout Jew who was also a Roman citizen.

30 The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from *his* bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish "congress"; Paul would have the opportunity to speak before this same group that he was once a member of. Acts 26:10 clearly says that Paul had a *vote* - usually, that would be used as a member of the Sanhedrin.

**THIS WAS PAUL'S CIRCLE... HE KNEW MANY OF THEM, AS PASTOR MIKE POINTED OUT LAST WEEK... THEY WERE HIS OIKOS... HE LOVED THEM AND WANTED THEM TO KNOW JESUS... THIS IS HIS CHANCE TO SHARE THE GOSPEL.**

**Chapter 23** Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." Customarily, members of the Sanhedrin were addressed as "fathers." Again, calling them brothers was a sign of familiarity.

**GOOD CONSCIENCE...** It has been said the only way to have a good conscience is to have a bad memory. Not so with Paul...

"Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." Paul's statement in **1 Corinthians 4:4** is relevant: ***For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.***

**Verse 2** And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.



**ANANIAS**


**Wicked high priest!** A multimillionaire by today's standards, Ananias was one of the worst high priests in the history of Israel. He had worked out a deal with the priests so that animals brought to the temple for sacrifice would conveniently be found flawed upon inspection. *"Can't use this one," the priest would say. "This sheep is blemished. But this is your lucky day. We just happen to have some sheep over here you could purchase."*

*"Really?" the relieved supplicant would say. "How much?"*

*"Well, they're a little pricy—but they're worth it," the priest would answer. "They've already been preapproved."*

Through such deals, Ananias gouged the people and pocketed huge amounts of money. **Bruce in his commentary notes that He had no problem using violence and assassination to further his interests** No wonder that, after serving 12 years as high priest, he was assassinated by his own countrymen. **His own guilty conscience might have been the reason he struck Paul in the mouth.**

3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, *you* whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" **His command to have Paul struck was in fact contrary to both the spirit and the letter of the law. Deuteronomy 25:1-2 says only a man found guilty can be beaten, and Paul had been found guilty of nothing.**

 Hughes adds, "This order was illegal, for the Jewish law said, "He who strikes the cheek of one Israelite, strikes as it were the glory of God," and "He that strikes a man strikes the Holy One." All this flashed through Paul's mind in an instant, and he in turn called out: "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall!"

**The Jews painted their tombs white as a warning, because to touch a tomb brought defilement. Paul was saying that Ananias, though he looked okay on the outside, was full of decaying filth. This was angry, impulsive retaliation.**

4 And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" 5 Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" **Bible**



**scholar Alfred Edersheim suggests that Ananias was not wearing his robes because he only donned the distinctive dress when participating in public affairs. Some think he did not know because Paul's eyesight was bad. Others think that Paul is being sarcastic here, with the idea "I didn't think that anyone who acted in such a manner *could* be the high priest!"**



**NEVERTHELESS... REALIZING HIS ERROR PAUL IMMEDIATELY RECANTED – A CREDIT TO HIS CHARACTER, HE WAS HUMAN... HE MADE MISTAKES... AND HE WAS THE FIRST TO ADMIT SO.**

**THINGS ARE NOT GOING AS HE HAD HOPED, THE BEST DEFENSE IS OFFENCE SO ITS TIME TO DIVIDE THE ENEMY... I'LL MAKE MY ENEMIES TAKE THEIR EYES OFF OF ME AND FIGHT AMONGST THEMSELVES... Paul is a smart dude!** 6 But when

Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" **He didn't lie... just used the truth to divide his enemies...** 7 And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. 8 For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. 9 Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God. 10 Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring *him* into the barracks.

**Just how violent this must have become can be discerned from the fact that the only other place where the word translated "pulled to pieces**

**(torn).** is used in Mark 5:4, where the Gerasene demoniac is said to have torn his chains and shackles apart. Claudius Lysias, the tribune, must have been ready to tear his ears out. Just a few days before, he had rescued Paul from mob violence in the temple. When he allowed Paul to speak, the riot flared up again. Then, about to beat the truth out of Paul, he discovered that he had almost whipped a Roman citizen. Now, before the Sanhedrin, there was nearly another riot!

**Here's Claudius Lysias again—rescuing Paul from riot number three. He must be thinking these Jews, one word and it sends them into tirades... first it was "Gentile" now it's "resurrection".**

**verse 11** But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." Still a lot of gas in your tank Paul and I still have much for you to do! **The greatest words a faithful child of God can hear are "there is more for you to do." Those words grieve a lazy servant, but bring joy to a faithful servant. Dear child of God, there is more for you to do! More people to bring to Christ, more ways for you to glorify Him, more people to pray with, more humble ways to serve His people, more hungry to feed, more naked to clothe, more weary saints for you to encourage!**

**12** And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. **13** Now there were more than 40 who had formed this conspiracy. **14** They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. **15** Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near."



16 So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. **Prior to this passage we did not know Paul had a sister, let alone a nephew! In fact, this is the only record in all of Scripture of their existence.** 17 Then Paul called one of the centurions to *him* and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him." 18 So he took him and brought *him* to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to *him* and asked *me* to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you." 19 Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside, and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?" 20 And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. 21 But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you." 22 So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded *him*, "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me." 23 And he called for 2 centurions, saying, "Prepare 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; 24 and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring *him* safely to Felix the governor." **Paul left on horseback surrounded by 470 soldiers. HE LEFT TOWN MORE LIKE A KING THAN A CRIMINAL!** Meanwhile, his assassins were left in town fighting insistent hunger pains.

Back to verse 11... "Be of good cheer, Paul; Take courage!

**This was one of the darkest nights in Paul's life.** Paul must

have thought... What a blow it I am! “I went into the temple to try to appease James and the other brothers—and a riot broke out. I shared my testimony on the steps of the Fortress—and people wanted to kill me. I came into the Sanhedrin—and created chaos and confusion. **I FAILED.** Bottom line he wanted his old buddies to know Jesus... he wanted his old crowd to come to know Him. He loved them... when you love someone you want what’s best for them... Jesus, salvation, forgiveness of sins, eternal life... no hell is always what’s best... so Paul must have felt like a real blow it! **As Morgan says Bold courageous fearless during the day the night of loneliness finds the strength spent and the enemy is never slow to take advantage of that fact!**

**THAT’S WHY HEBREWS 11 WAS WRITTEN ... TO ENCOURAGE THE RUNNER WHEN HE FEELS DEFEATED!**

**Abraham shouts from the grandstands... I know I blew it... I didn’t fully trust God. Have you ever felt as though God needed your help to fulfill His will for you. Hear Abraham shout from the stands**

**Sarah Laughs at God in disbelief ...** Lacking in faith; Wearied by the years of battle... Do you need inspiration to run on **Sarah shouts from the grandstands...**

Hebrews 11 Verse 20 **Issac** is listed as a hero of the faith why, He blew it and blessed Jacob and not Esau. Have you ever blown it... Hear Issac shout from the grandstands...

**Moses** blew it by killing an Egyptian guard

First 40 years of Moses’ life he was a **somebody**

Next 40 years of Moses’ life he was a **nobody**

Last 40 years of Moses’ life show what God can do with **somebody** who is a **nobody**...

Moses shouts from the grandstands...

**Samson... Have you ever fallen to the lusts of the eyes, the pride of life, or the lusts of the flesh** Samson shouts from the grandstands...

**David** saw a bathing Bathsheba His sin caused the death of

thousands *Hear David in his brokenness shout from the stands... God is a God of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> chances... don't give up runner... it's worth it stay in the race!!!*

**Peter** foot in mouth disease (only time he opened his mouth was to change... Peter shouts from the grandstands...

## ME WITH MY BROTHER GREG

**JESUS SAYS BE OF GOOD CHEER PAUL**, Why? Not because everything is fine; but because God is still on His throne, and He still holds to His promise that *all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)*.

Anyone can **be of good cheer** when everything is great; but the Christian can **be of good cheer** when everything is rotten, because he knows that he has a great God.

**Paul had been miraculously delivered from jail cells before; but this time, the Lord met him right in the jail cell. Jesus knew Paul needed a little extra touch...**

Only Christ uses these words in the New Testament, and all 5 instances brought wonderful comfort.

1. He called the bedridden paralytic, “**BE OF GOOD CHEER** son; your sins are forgiven” (Matthew 9:2).
2. To the woman with the twelve year hemorrhage he said, “**BE OF GOOD CHEER** daughter, your faith has healed you” (Matthew 9:22).
3. To his frightened disciples as he came to them across the storm-tossed Sea of Galilee he said, “**BE OF GOOD CHEER!** It is I. Don't be afraid” (Matthew 14:27).
4. In the Upper Room, on the night of his crucifixion, he said, “**BE OF GOOD CHEER** I have overcome the world” (John 16:33. R Kent adds, “This is Christ's unique word for all who are trying to serve him, however feebly!”

## At camp when God spoke to me

**Isaiah 43:1b-2** – “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And

*through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.”*

*Lord I need you... every hour I need you!*