

## Acts 23 Handout

Verse 1 -

How is Paul looking at the Council? \_\_\_\_\_

How does Paul say he has lived his life before God to this day?

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What Paul is basically saying is that he is not guilty and they are wrong in judging him so, because their charges are baseless.

'Lived' (*politeuomai*) literally meant to live as a citizen. Here, Luke seems to be using the term in a sense of how Paul lived as belonging to the kingdom of God.

Paul is affirming that he was a loyal Jew who lived as a good Jewish citizen and had not broken the law. His conscience did not condemn him even though the Jews were condemning him.

Conscience is a favorite word of Paul. He used it twice in Acts and 23 times in his letters. Conscience means 'to know with, to know together'. It is the inner judge that approves when you do something right and disapproves when you do something wrong (Romans 2:15). Conscience doesn't set the standard; it only applies the standards of the person whether they are good or bad, right or wrong.

Warren Wiersbe said, "*Conscience may be compared to a window that lets in the light. God's Law is the light; and the cleaner the window is, the more the light shines in. As the window gets dirty, the light gets dimmer; and finally the light becomes darkness. A good conscience, or pure conscience (1 Tim. 3:9), is one that lets in God's light so that we are properly convicted if we do wrong and encouraged if we do right.*"

**How can Paul claim he had a good conscience after persecuting the church and causing innocent people to die?**

**I Timothy 1:13**

*"Even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief."*

He had lived up to the light that he had, and that is all that a good conscience requires. After Paul became a Christian, he saw things differently, because the bright light of glory shone into his heart (II Cor. 4:6). He realized that he was "the chief of sinners" (I Timothy 1:15).

Throughout his life, Paul always followed his conscience before God. Even before he was a Christian his conscience was bent towards God. Even when he was approving the imprisonment of Christians, the stoning of Stephen, and signing death warrants for Christians,

Paul was sincere towards God even though he was sincerely wrong. Paul thought what he was doing was right.

**Verse 2 -**

Just to clarify, this Ananias isn't the same one who baptized Paul and helped him back in Acts 9.

**How did Ananias the high priest react to what Paul said?** \_\_\_\_\_

Ananias became high priest in A.D. 47. This position was a political appointment. He was very wealthy. He was also known for his harshness and cruelty and often resorted to violence, even assassination to accomplish what he wanted. He was very pro-Roman.

**Verse 3-5**

**How does Paul respond to the high priest?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What does Paul call him?** \_\_\_\_\_

A whitewashed wall was one that was usually inferior on the inside even though it looked good on the outside. Paul was basically calling him a hypocrite.

**What did Ananias do that was in violation of the law?** \_\_\_\_\_

Jewish law considered a person innocent until proven guilty, but Ananias had punished Paul before he had even been charged with anything, much less tried and found guilty. This would have been unexpected behavior of a high priest.

**How did those present react to Paul's words?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What was Paul's response to this?** \_\_\_\_\_

- Paul had not been in Jerusalem for an extended visit for over 20 years.
- Ananias might not have been wearing his high priestly robes since this was not a regular meeting of the Sanhedrin.
- Some see Paul speaking ironically: "I didn't think that a man who would give such an order could be the high priest."

Paul quotes Exodus 22:28. He seems to be quoting the Old Covenant here for the benefit of the Jews who lived under it.

**Verse 6-8**

**What did Paul perceive about these men?**

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**What three things does Paul say about himself?**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**What happened to the council (vs.7)?** \_\_\_\_\_

Paul knew that the Pharisees and Sadducees majorly disagreed over this topic. Whether it was Paul's intention to divide the group, we don't know, but that's exactly what happened.

**What do the Sadducees say?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What do the Pharisees say?** \_\_\_\_\_

The Sadducees dominated the Sanhedrin which was authorized to act something like a supreme court over issues pertaining to the Jews. They were subject to Roman authority, but Rome left religious matters in their hands.

**Verses 9-10**

**What happened?** \_\_\_\_\_

**We are told some of the scribes (expert scholars) with the Pharisees started arguing. What did they say?**

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They affirm Paul's innocence. As best we can tell from what Luke writes, the Council hadn't actually interrogated Paul. So these scribes seem to be basing their 'not guilty' verdict on Paul's belief in the resurrection from the dead. This was the same belief that the Sadducees wanted to condemn Paul with.

**What do they supposed could have happened at the end of verse 9?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**What are we told occurred in verse 10?** \_\_\_\_\_

Things are so bad that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces, so he ordered Paul to be taken to the barracks.

**Verse 11 -**

We get a contrast here with the word 'but'. They take Paul down to the barracks, but he's not alone.

**Who are we told comes to him?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the first thing the Lord says to Paul?** \_\_\_\_\_

He goes on to say 'Just like you testified about me in Jerusalem you must testify about me in Rome'.

**Verse 12-13**

**What do the Jews do the next day?** \_\_\_\_\_

**We are told they took an oath. What was it?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**How many were involved in this plot?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Verse 14-15**

These men share their plot and the oath they took with the chief priests.

They want the chief priests to have Paul brought to the Council so they can "investigate" his case more thoroughly.

**What is their plan?** \_\_\_\_\_

This is the most detailed plot description against Paul in the book of Acts.

**Verses 16-21**

**But, who hears about the ambush and tells Paul?** \_\_\_\_\_

This is the only reference to Paul's immediate family in the New Testament. We know nothing more about "Paul's sister" than what Luke stated here.

Paul was able to receive visitors in the barracks where he was a prisoner because he was a Roman citizen that was in protective custody. He could also ask a centurion to do certain favors for him, which he did here.

**What does Paul tell the centurion to do?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**The boy tells the commander everything he overheard. What does he tell the commander the men are waiting for?**

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**Verses 22-24**

**After telling the boy to tell no one he notified him, what does the commander do?**

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**Where are they going to go? \_\_\_\_\_**

**What else will they have with? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Who are they taking Paul to? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Verses 25-30**

**We learn that the commander's name is Claudius Lysias. Who does he write a letter to?**

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**How does Claudius refer to Felix? \_\_\_\_\_**

This title was used as an honorary title for a high official in the Roman government.

Notice how Claudius paints himself in the best possible light. He conveniently leaves out the part where he almost has Paul flogged before learning he is a Roman citizen.

**What does Claudius tell Felix at the end of verse 29?**

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Claudius goes on to say that once he learned of the plot against Paul, he sent him right away to Felix.

**What else are we told he did at the end of verse 30?**

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**Verses 31-32**

We are told the soldiers brought Paul by night to Antipatris. This would have been a safe place to stop and spend the rest of the night as there was a Roman colony there. This would have been a difficult ride as they were traveling 40 miles in the cover of darkness.



**What are we told they did the next day?** \_\_\_\_\_

They obviously felt that the greatest danger was behind them. They had 25 miles to go to get to Caesarea.

**Verses 33-35**

The horsemen deliver the letter and Paul to Felix.

**After reading the letter, what does Felix ask Paul?** \_\_\_\_\_

Felix would have needed to make sure that Paul fell under his jurisdiction.

There were two kinds of provinces in the Roman Empire:

- Those under the control of the Roman senate
- Those which reported to the emperor

Felix learns that Paul is from Cilicia which is an imperial province under the direct control of the emperor and responsible to him.

Can you see how God is operating behind the scenes and laying the steps for Paul and the emperor Nero to come face to face? We see how Paul is finally going to get to Rome.

**What does Felix say to Paul in verse 35?** \_\_\_\_\_

We are told Paul was kept in Herod's Praetorium.

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As we look back over the events recorded here in this chapter, you can't help but be impressed with Paul's commitment to his calling. Paul didn't look for the easy way, but rather the way that would most honor the Lord and win the lost. He was even willing to become a prisoner if that's what it took to further the work of the gospel. The delivery of Paul to Caesarea marks the beginning of a two-year imprisonment in that city.

**How can we have courage when we know that God may allow us to suffer severely?**