

**1188 Paul's trial before council, and transfer to Governor - Acts(22)17-(23)35  
(by Whirlwind)**

**First, we see Paul explaining that he is an apostle to the Gentiles by the Lord's command, and the strong reaction of the Jews. Second, we see that because Paul was a Roman citizen, he avoided being tortured, and that he invoked his Roman citizenship only twice. Third, we see Paul honestly stating that he did not know the high priest at that time, and the Lord's promise that he would bear witness in Rome. Fourth, it explains why the Jews' plot to kill Paul failed. Finally, it mentions the commander's process of sending Paul to Governor Felix and the governor's disposition of the matter.**

**Please note that this article is an expansion of the topicwise Bible study held on Sunday (5/3/26). Unless otherwise specified, verses refer to those in NASB95. If this article refers previous articles, they can all be found on our website, '<https://a-christian-voice.com/>'; click on 'Understanding Spiritual Life'.**

**1. Paul recounts how he was appointed by the Lord as an apostle to the Gentiles**

**"It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.' And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.' And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" They listened to him up to this statement, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!" And as they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air."(Acts 22:17-23)**

**This passage begins by foretelling a fact: "But Saul (Paul) kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ. When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket."(Acts 9:22-25) This is followed by the acknowledgment of a fact, including that "Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. ..." (Acts 8:1) Finally, when it comes to the Lord calling him to be an apostle to the Gentiles, we see the Jews' reaction: "...Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!"(Acts 22:22) At that time, the Jews regarded Gentiles as dogs (cf. Matthew 15:21-28) who could not be saved, so such a reaction was not surprising. But this ultimately led Paul, in chains, to Rome, where he completed his prison epistles. We see that "And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered."(Acts 28:30-31) Thus was the will of the Triune God fulfilled.**

## **2. Paul avoided torture because he was a Roman citizen**

**"the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way. But when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?" When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and told him, saying, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman." The commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" And he said, "Yes." The commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born a citizen." Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains. But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them."(Acts 22:24–30)**

**Paul invoked his Roman citizenship only twice, and both times were in the presence of Gentiles. Once was in Philippi, where he said, "But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out.""(Acts 16:37) The other occasion was here, where it spared him an unnecessary flogging and ensured they treated him according to the regulations for Roman citizens. Here, we also see, incidentally, just how valuable it was historically to be a Roman citizen. So, "...on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them."(Acts 22:30)**

## **3. Paul honestly declared not knowing the high priest at that time and the Lord's promise**

**"Paul, looking intently (G816) at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day." The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?" But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!" As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. And there occurred a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them**

and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks. But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."(Acts 23:1–11)

Note that Paul dared only to say he had acted in good conscience up to that point, for he knew full well that God is infinite while man is finite, and that man is prone to stumble. Therefore, even in his old age, he still said, "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."(Philippians 3:13-14)

When Paul stood before the Sanhedrin for judgment, he fixed his gaze (G816) on the people. This word G816 appears only 15 times, and its meaning is very clear, just as this Scripture says: "But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently (G816) at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was."(2 Corinthians 3:7) When "gazing" occurs, we must pay special attention to what happens afterward.

Next, it speaks of being judged by the law yet violating the law. We hear, "...Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; ..." (Acts 23:5) This indicates that Paul did not recognize Ananias, the high priest at that time; evidently, he thought the high priest was not present, because Paul was a true Christian, and "the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (1 John 3:8–9) Therefore, he would not sin by lying knowingly and willfully. Indeed, "he cannot sin" is from God's perspective, it is possible for a person to slip away from God since people are weak and do slip away from God. At such times, the Bible makes it very clear: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."(1 John 1:9) Once sins are forgiven, it is as if one were starting anew from a state of innocence; therefore, in human experience, those who believe in the Lord do not continue to sin.

He observed that the Pharisees and Sadducees were roughly evenly divided in their attire. Thus, some assumed that if one side had more people, Paul might have been expected to adopt a different stance to align with the larger group. But no, because Paul would not lie, he stated the truth: "...I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"(Acts 23:6) This caused the crowd to split into two factions and a great uproar ensued. To protect him, the commander took him into the barracks. "But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."(Acts 23:11) This indeed was realized, just as we mentioned earlier in Acts 28:30–31.

#### 4. The reason for the failure of the Jews' plot to kill Paul

**"When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. There were more than forty who formed this plot. They came to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. Now therefore, you and the Council notify the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case by a more thorough investigation; and we for our part are ready to slay him before he comes near the place." But the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul. Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Lead this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him." So he took him and led him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to lead this young man to you since he has something to tell you." The commander took him by the hand and stepping aside, began to inquire of him privately, "What is it that you have to report to me?" And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him. So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they slay him; and now they are ready and waiting for the promise from you." So the commander let the young man go, instructing him, "Tell no one that you have notified me of these things." And he called to him two of the centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen." They were also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor."(Acts 23:12-24)**

**This passage clearly explains the Jews' plan to kill Paul, the reason for its failure, and the commander's immediate decision to escort him to Governor Felix. Please read the Scripture for yourself. We may note that when the Jews who had sworn the oath learned that Paul had escaped, they likely had no choice but to break their oath; otherwise, they would have had to fast until death. Furthermore, the New Testament mentions Paul's nephew only this one time, as if it were all a coincidence. Yet we know that God often uses coincidences to accomplish His will, as seen in the experiences of Ruth in the Book of Ruth. Similarly, in the account of Haman and Mordecai, "During that night the king could not sleep so he gave an order to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king. It was found written what Mordecai had reported concerning Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers, that they had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus."(Esther 6:1-2) Finally, "So Haman took the robe and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.""(Esther 6:11) Haman bowed down before Mordecai. God's work is truly marvelous. It is important to note that not every coincidence is God's work; we must discern.**

## 5. The process by which the commander escorted Paul to Governor Felix

**"And he wrote a letter having this form: "Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings. "When this man was arrested by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. "And wanting to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their Council; and I found him to be accused over questions about their Law, but under no accusation deserving death or imprisonment. "When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you." So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. But the next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the barracks. When these had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. When he had read it, he asked from what province he was, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia, he said, "I will give you a hearing after your accusers arrive also," giving orders for him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium."(Acts 23:25-35)**

**We see that the commander was lying. Far from intending to save Paul, he first bound him and only then realized he was a Roman citizen, yet he made no mention of his own mistake. Isn't this similar to what many people believe—that a "white lie" isn't really a lie? A white lie is still a lie. Clearly, in the eyes of the Romans, Paul had committed no crime deserving of death or imprisonment. But because some were seeking to harm him, the commander immediately sent him to Governor Felix and ordered those accusing him to bring their case before the governor. The governor then had him kept under guard in Herod's Praetorium until the accusers arrived.**