

## Acts 22:30 – 23:11

### *Paul Before the Council*

#### Learning Objectives

- Show how we should stay true to our faith despite persecution from those in authority
- Show how we should follow the Holy Spirit's leading



Icebreaker: Have you ever had a public speaking experience that did not turn out as you had hoped?

What happened?

#### Previously In Acts

This passage discusses Paul appearing before the Sanhedrin. In the prior passage, Paul was scourged by the Roman tribune; after discovering that Paul was a Roman citizen, the tribune turned to the Sanhedrin (Jewish high court) for help.

#### Acts 22:30 – 23:11 (NIV)

<sup>30</sup> The commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews. So the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the members of the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.

**23:1** Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, “My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.” <sup>2</sup> At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. <sup>3</sup> 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!”

<sup>4</sup> Those who were standing near Paul said, “How dare you insult God’s high priest!”

<sup>5</sup> 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.’”

<sup>6</sup> Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, “My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.” <sup>7</sup> When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. <sup>8</sup> (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)

<sup>9</sup> 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?” <sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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.”

? What is remarkable about the high priest breaking the Roman laws that were in place by striking Paul?

*Possible Answer: In the previous passage, Paul faced ill-treatment from the Roman tribune. Once the tribune discovered he was a Roman citizen, he was sent to the Sanhedrin. However, despite the change in the authority involved, the ill-treatment continued.*

? Has there been a time when you felt unfairly treated by someone in authority over you? What happened, and how did you respond?

*Possible Answer: Answers will vary.*

? In verse 5, Paul showed respect for the high priest despite the hypocrisy and unfairness with which he was treated. How could this attitude translate to our treatment of those in leadership today?

*Possible Answer: Answers will vary, but could include respect for political leaders (despite differing views), employers, etc.*

? What can we learn from Paul’s example in teaching about Jesus despite facing confrontation from the various religious leaders and civil authorities?

*Possible Answer: Perseverance despite rejection and difficulty; faithfulness in sharing even when we do not always see results. Paul shared the message of Jesus boldly despite opposition from various authorities.*

? How did Paul turn the focus of the controversy away from himself? How could we apply this same method in uncomfortable situations in our own lives?

The Roman government in Jerusalem gave some powers to the Sanhedrin, the ruling council comprised of Jews and headed by the high priest. The Sanhedrin oversaw temple affairs and had some police powers of its own. While the Jews were endowed with some elements of self-rule, there was still tension between the Jews and their Roman rulers. Some of the tension arose from issues clearly political in nature - taxation, for instance - and some of the tension revolved around issues of a religious nature. However, politics and religion were not at all the separate domains in either Rome or Judea that they are in many modern Western nations. Pharisees were individuals who had a high regard for the word of God, and debated on how strictly the Law of Moses should be applied to the surrounding culture. Sadducees, on the other hand, were aristocratic Jews who were not sympathetic to the teachings of the Pharisees. They believed that only the first five books of Moses had any authority and that books handed down by rabbis did not.

*Possible Answer: Paul knew of the longstanding disagreements between the Sadducees and Pharisees, and he used that to turn them against each other. Paul shed light on their disagreement to show that he was not the source of their rivalry, nor were they (the Sadducees and Pharisees) “on the same team” against him. In uncomfortable situations that we may deal with, shedding light on where the true issues lie (whether or not there was a resurrection, in this case, according to verse 8) in the midst of the situation may also be beneficial.*

**?** In verse 10, the passage notes that the disagreement had become violent. In verse 11, the Lord’s first words to Paul were “Take courage.” Has there been a time in your life where you could not see the “light at the end of the tunnel,” but looking back on the situation, you know God was at work in your life and/or in the situation? What was the situation and how did it turn out?

*Possible Answer: Answers will vary.*

**?** How did Paul exemplify following the Holy Spirit’s leading in this passage?

*Possible Answer: Paul showed perseverance (no wavering in his resolve to profess Jesus Christ). Verse 11 shows Paul being encouraged by the Holy Spirit, and being prepared to face similar challenges in Rome.*

### **For Discussion and Accountability**

**?** How does Paul’s example challenge us to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading?

**?** Are there areas of your life where you have been challenged to or need to start persevering in your faith?