

PAUL'S DEFENSE ACTS 23

The apostle Paul has gone through the mob beating him, the soldiers rescuing him, his speech from the steps of the castle, the mob becoming angry again at the mention of the word "Gentile," then an attempt to scourge him. The chief captain has tried to find out what the uproar is all about. He is making one final attempt to find out by commanding the chief priests and all their council to appear, as well as the apostle Paul. We call Acts 23, Paul's defense.

- I. Paul's affirmation before the council (vss. 1-11)
 - A. Many believe this is the Sanhedrin that Paul is looking intently at.
 - B. I have lived. . .
 1. I have conducted myself as a citizen of God's kingdom.
 2. He has conducted himself in such a way as to have a clear conscience.
 - a. He did not say he was without guilt.
 - b. All that a clear conscience means is that one is acting upon the knowledge he has obtained.
 3. "Until this day." Since he became a Christian up to present time.
 4. Paul's defense was, "I have lived in such obedience to what I understood to be God's demands on me, that I have always had a clear conscience."
 - C. High priest .. Ananias (Not to be confused with Annas -4:6; or with Ananias of 5:1; or with Ananias of 9:10; 22:12)
 1. Commanded them to strike Paul.
 2. This was his way of silencing Paul. This was his way of saying the sum and substance of Paul's defense—his claim to integrity and innocence—was false.
 3. Scriptures do not state whether this was actually carried out or not.
 - D. Paul's response (23:3).
 1. God will strike you, you white-washed wall.
 2. Paul was calling him a hypocrite (Matt. 23:27)
 3. Some see Paul giving rise to a sudden human burst of hot temper.
 4. Others see Paul full of righteous indignation. The high priest was sitting to judge Paul according to the law, and at the same time commanding him to be smitten contrary to the law. He was innocent until proven guilty.
 5. Revilest thou God's high priest.
 - a. The high priest was God's representative in spite of his bad character.
 - b. Paul was not aware of who he was.
 - c. It seems Paul offers an apology because he did not know this man was the high priest.
 - d. Out of respect for office, not the man.
 - e. Exod. 22:28—general spirit of respect. Should we have same today? (Political, etc...)
 - E. Sadducees and Pharisees (6-10)
 1. Paul may very well have remembered the faces of some present.
 2. He provoked a dissension between these two groups.
 - a. Paul was a Pharisee.
 - b. Pharisees believed in the resurrection and spirit beings.
 - c. Sadducees did not believe (v.8). They believed that the soul died with the body. If the soul doesn't survive death, there would not need to have a resurrection of the body.
 3. We find no evil in this man. They lost sight of the real accusation against Paul (In reference to the law and the temple).
 4. There arose a great dissension.
 5. Captain still did not have his answer as to what Paul had done.
 6. Brought Paul back into the castle.
 - F. The Lord encourages Paul (v.11).
 1. Paul needed this encouragement.
 2. He had gone thru a great deal the last couple of days.

3. Prediction of Agabus had come true.
 4. Would he get the opportunity to preach in Rome?
 5. Perhaps he was praying and the appearance of Jesus was in response.
 6. You must bear witness of me in Rome.
- II. The plot to kill Paul (23:12-30)
- A. Jews banded together.
 1. Bound themselves under an oath.
 2. They would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.
 - a. Nothing in their life was more important than the death of Paul.
 - b. Every thought and moment was to be concentrated on that one end.
 3. More than forty who formed this plot.
 4. Paul's life is in great danger.
 5. The band had confidence in the chief priest.
 6. Tell the chief captain to bring him down tomorrow before you men and we will kill him.
 - B. Plot discovered.
 1. Paul's nephew heard of the plot.
 2. He told Paul what was going to happen.
 3. He was taken to the chief captain.
 4. "Paul the prisoner..."
 5. He told the captain of the plot.
 6. Do not tell anyone else what you have told me.
 - C. Paul rescued again.
 1. Two centurions, 200 soldiers, 9 PM, Caesarea, 70 horsemen, 200 spearmen.
 - a. Some would travel so far.
 - b. Others, all the way to Caesarea (23:31-33).
 - c. "Spearman" might be slingers (slingshots), javelin-throwers, light armored spearmen.
 2. Large escort for one prisoner.
 3. With what had happened, chief captain was not going to take chances.
 4. Paul was to ride on an animal.
 5. Take him to Felix, the governor.
 - D. Felix.
 1. Felix at one time was a slave, but became governor of Judea because of the influence of his brother, Pallas, over Claudius the emperor.
 2. Some said he wielded "the power of a King in the mind of a slave."
 3. Drusilla was his third wife, who was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I.
 4. When she was sixteen, he convinced her to leave her husband and marry him.
 - E. Lysias wrote Felix a letter.
 1. Most excellent governor—denotes rank or office.
 2. He recounts the events that had happened.
 3. The dispute has to do with their law and not some Roman law that has been violated.
 4. He has done nothing to deserve death.
 5. I have sent him to you to preserve him from assassination.
 6. The accusers were to come to Felix with their case against Paul.
 7. Felix would hear the case when the accusers came.
 8. In the meantime, Paul was to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

Con: Clear conscience... based on what knowledge? The resurrection of Christ. The central figure of all of Paul's teachings. (I Cor. 2:2; 15:1-4).