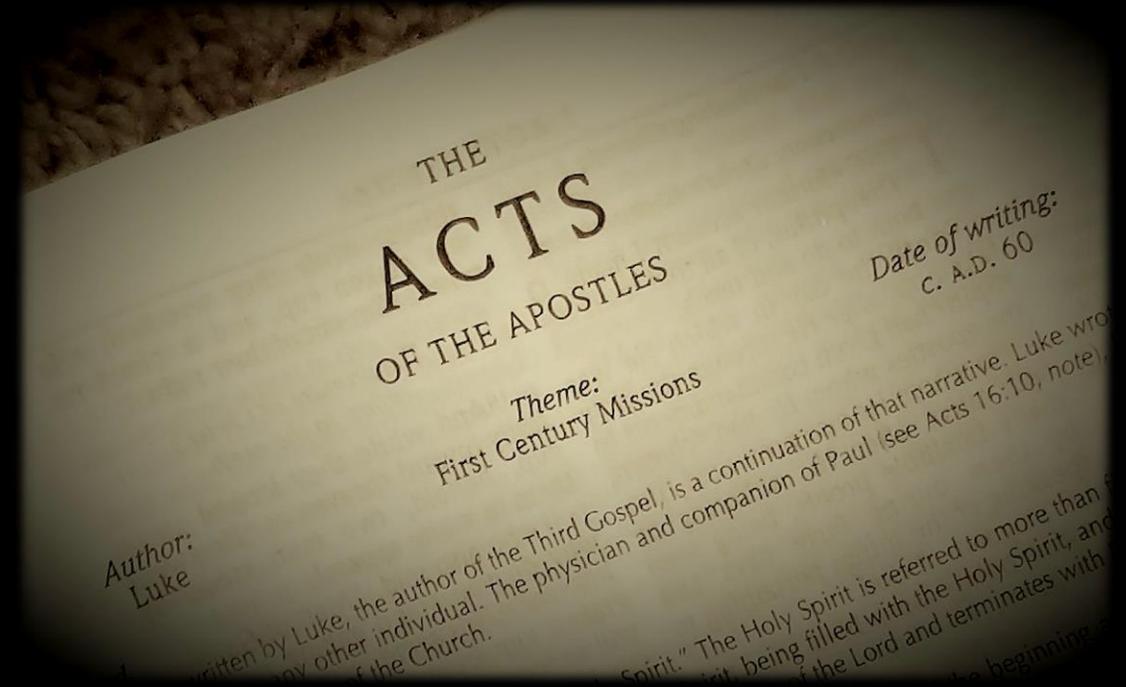


Verse by Verse

Acts 23



Previously in *Acts*

Previously in Acts

- A couple of chapters back, we saw Paul return to **Jerusalem** where, among others, he met with **James**.
- Then he made his way to the temple.
- After some **false accusations**, a mob scene broke out and Paul found himself in **Roman custody**.
- He has been there ever since

Acts 23 Introduction

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- Having already addressed the mob, Paul will now appear before the Jewish council.
- This will be the first of many steps that will eventually lead Paul to Rome.

Acts 23 Key Verse

- Acts 23:11 (ESV)

The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”

Acts 23 Outline

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1. Paul Before the Council 23:1-10
2. Jesus Appears to Paul 23:11
3. A Plot to Kill Paul 23:12-22
4. Paul Is Sent to Felix 23:23-35

1. Paul Before the Council Acts 23:1-10

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- **23:1** “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.”
- By saying this, Paul is claiming that his Christian convictions are in keeping with God’s will.

1. Paul Before the Council Acts 23:1-10

- 23:2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.
- This was more than the high priest could handle.
- As far as he was concerned it was precisely these Christian beliefs that should be called into question.

1. Paul Before the Council Acts 23:1-10

- **23:3** Paul responds quite harshly, but this is not so different from something Jesus said.
- **Matt 23:27-28** (ESV)

²⁷ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

1. Paul Before the Council **Acts 23:1-10**

- **23:4-5** We can give Paul some real credit here for admitting that maybe he went a little too far.
- He even cites the book of Exodus against himself.
- **Exodus 22:28** (ESV)

You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

1. Paul Before the Council Acts 23:1-10

- 23:4-5 Question: How could Paul not have known which one of them was the high priest?
- There are at least two factors that make this realistic.
 1. The meeting was called hastily. It is possible the high priest was not wearing any special clothing.
 2. It is likely that Paul's eyesight was bad.

1. Paul Before the Council Acts 23:1-10

- Galatians 4:15 (ESV)

What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.

- Galatians 6:11 (ESV)

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

1. Paul Before the Council Acts 23:1-10

- 23:6-10 Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees ...
- Is Paul now just messing with the Sanhedrin because he knows what will divide them?

1. Paul Before the Council Acts 23:1-10

- **23:6-10** Is Paul now just messing with the Sanhedrin because he knows what will divide them?
- **Maybe so.** There is no question he knew which card to play and when to play it.
- He was **a devout Jew, a Roman, a Pharisee,** etc. ...
- Still, the fact is that **the resurrection** is the big, original defining doctrine of Christianity.

1. Paul Before the Council Acts 23:1-10

- 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 (ESV)

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, ...

1. Paul Before the Council Acts 23:1-10

- 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 (ESV)

... whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

1. Paul Before the Council Acts 23:1-10

- Epilogue concerning the high priest Ananias.
- History tells us he was assassinated a few years later by Jewish zealots.
- They hated him for his dishonesty and greed and considered him a collaborator with the Romans.
- It turns out that Paul's words that God would strike this "whitewashed wall" were prophetic.

2. Jesus Appears to Paul Acts 23:11

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- This, you will recall, is our **Key Verse**.
- **Acts 23:11** (ESV)

The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”

2. Jesus Appears to Paul **Acts 23:11**

- J. B. Phillips (1906 – 1982) translated it slightly differently. I like the word “witness” or “witnessed.”
- **Acts 23:11** (Phillips)

That night the Lord stood by Paul, and said, “Take heart!—for as you have witnessed boldly for me in Jerusalem so you must give your witness to me in Rome.”

2. Jesus Appears to Paul Acts 23:11

- Paul was very committed to fulfilling what he perceived to be God's plans for him.
- He saw himself as under an obligation to preach the gospel to every type of person in every place he could.

2. Jesus Appears to Paul Acts 23:11

- Romans 1:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

2. Jesus Appears to Paul Acts 23:11

- This attitude would make Christ's words immensely encouraging to Paul.
- It might have been nicer to hear "You will be set free to go to Rome, etc." but that was not part of the plan.
- Again, Paul was committed to God's plan for him so his time in Roman custody was worth it.

2. Jesus Appears to Paul Acts 23:11

- We might also relate Paul's ministry to this principle that Jesus expressed.
- Luke 16:10 (ESV)

One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

3. A Plot to Kill Paul Acts 23:12-22

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- 23:12 bound themselves by an oath
- The Greek word here is pretty strong – *anathematizō*
- It is on the level of putting yourself under a curse.
- Too bad for them. Paul got away.

3. A Plot to Kill Paul Acts 23:12-22

- 23:14-15 chief priests and elders ... along with the council
- It is remarkable that even the chief priests and elders were in on this plot.
- And the plan is to involve the Sanhedrin or Jewish council to make it all appear as official as possible.

3. A Plot to Kill Paul Acts 23:12-22

- 23:16 the son of Paul's sister
- Luke does not tell us how the young man found out about the plot.
- Nor do we get another word about him or his mother.
- I personally wonder if they also were Christians or if this help was out of simple family loyalty.

3. A Plot to Kill Paul Acts 23:12-22

- The gospel has enemies in high places.
- This plot shows us clearly just how determined some people are to put a stop to gospel-driven ministry.
- In a way, this shows just how much they feared the success of the Christian message.
- (It is safe to say the conspirators called off the vow.)

4. Paul Sent to Felix Acts 23:23-35

4. Paul Sent to Felix Acts 23:23-35

- 23:23 Two hundred soldiers ...
- third hour of the night = about 9:00pm
- The Roman tribune is doing his duty by protecting Paul – a Roman citizen.
- The evening departure will ensure that Paul is a safe distance from Jerusalem by morning.
- With the big show of force, the tribune will also show the Jews who's boss.

4. Paul Sent to Felix Acts 23:23-35

- **23:27** This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen.
- This is not exactly true. Paul only mentioned his citizenship after the tribune bound him with chains.
- But the tribune needs to look good to the governor.

4. Paul Sent to Felix Acts 23:23-35

- Speaking of the governor,
- **Tiberius Claudius Felix** was procurator of Judea from AD 52 – 59.
- This is the same office once held by **Pontius Pilate**, from AD 26 – 36.
- **Felix** and his brother **Pallus** were freed imperial slaves, so it was unusual for him to rise to this position.

4. Paul Sent to Felix Acts 23:23-35

- But again, they were once imperial slaves.
- They may have been slaves but they were also very well connected.
- Pallus especially had a lot of influence in the imperial court in Rome.
- This no doubt helped Felix, but probably caused some jealousy in political circles.

4. Paul Sent to Felix Acts 23:23-35

- No longer a slave but still familiar with the highest Roman society, Felix knew how to marry well.
- All three of his wives were princesses.
- One was a granddaughter of Anthony and Cleopatra.
- His was currently on Wife #3, Drusilla, who was of the family of Herod – useful for a governor of Judea.
- We will meet her in Acts 24.

4. Paul Sent to Felix Acts 23:23-35

- Felix was cruel and arbitrary in dispensing justice and utterly unsympathetic toward Jewish causes.
- There were frequent uprisings against his authority, which he squashed with simple brute force.
- This caused the Jews to hate him all the more.
- In the hands of Felix is where we will leave Paul.

4. Paul Sent to Felix Acts 23:23-35

- Matthew 10:17-19 (ESV)

¹⁷ Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸ and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹ When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour.

Acts 23 What We Just Read

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Acts 23 Key Verse

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The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”

Acts 23 Key Points

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1. Before the Jewish council Paul gave witness to the resurrection.
2. This shows us the boldness of Paul and reminds us not to be ashamed of our faith.
3. Jesus appeared to Paul and promised him that he would also bear witness in Rome.
4. This was a fulfillment of one of Paul's chief desires, though it happened in an unexpected way.

Acts 23 Key Points

5. This chapter reminds us that the gospel has enemies in high places.
6. They may be very committed to stopping gospel-driven ministry, but they will never succeed.
7. For our part, let's remember that if we are faithful in what is little, it opens the door for God to entrust us with much.

Acts 23 A Prayer

Acts 23 A Prayer

- Our Father in heaven,
- Thank you for the example of a faithful servant such as Paul.
- When we think of the trials he endured for his faith and his deep commitment to fulfilling your plans for his life, it gives us something to aspire to in our much smaller trials.

Acts 23 A Prayer

- Help us to never be ashamed of our faith.
- Help us also to be faithful to the very end, beginning with whatever seemingly small things you have entrusted to us.
- May we someday hear those words from our Lord saying,

Acts 23 A Prayer

- “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”
- In Christ,
- Amen

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