



Acts – Can I get a Witness? Wk. 78 “The Big Reveal” By Pastor Jody May 05/12/2024

Acts 22:22-23:10 ESV

Paul and the Roman Tribune

²²Up to this word they listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live.” ²³And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, ²⁴the tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by flogging, to find out why they were shouting against him like this. ²⁵But when they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?” ²⁶When the centurion heard this, he went to the tribune and said to him, “What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen.” ²⁷So the tribune came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” And he said, “Yes.” ²⁸The tribune answered, “I bought this citizenship for a large sum.” Paul said, “But I am a citizen by birth.” ²⁹So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

Paul Before the Council

³⁰But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them.

23 And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.” ²And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. ³Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?” ⁴Those who stood by said, “Would you revile God’s high priest?” ⁵And Paul said, “I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’”

⁶Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.” ⁷And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. ⁹Then a great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees’ party stood up and contended sharply, “We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?” ¹⁰And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks.



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[READ THE TEXT]

Pastor – “People of God, this is the Word of God.”

People – “Thanks be to God.”

[PRAY]

[INTRO. & BACKGROUND]

Well, when we left off last time Paul was in quite a pickle, he had walked himself into a hostile situation, by his own compulsion, as the HS had revealed to him that he would indeed be imprisoned and persecuted in Jerusalem by the Jews. He had, by the request of James, taken on a pursuit of humble service through humility to show the converted Jews in Jerusalem that he indeed was a friend, by taking four young men to the temple for purification. Not to replace the Gospel with law but to show he was still friendly to the Jews and their traditions. He had become all things to all men, to the weak he became weak meaning he would soften his stance on traditions so that he may influence all with the love of Christ. After several days into the rite of purification he was spotted by Jews from Ephesus, and then it erupted.

The time of his incarceration and tribulation had come due and these enraged Jews stirred up their fellow Jews against Paul by giving birth to the mob and its’ deranged mentality. They dragged him outside and began to beat him with intentions to kill the man, all the while the Temple, to look pious and above the revolt, shut the gates to the scene. The Tribune, that is the leader of the military in Jerusalem, storms the grounds to take Paul captive, to protect him as much as arrest the man for causing the disturbance of the peace. Before Paul is dragged away in chains last week, he gives his address in the Jewish vernacular to give his life story. He uses polite association to give credence to his story showing his **collapse** into sin from a zealousness for law, sharing his **conversion** through the Grace of Christ despite his sin, and finally the **commission** to take the Gospel to the Jews because he was told by Christ the Jews wouldn’t listen.

That leads us to today, where the Jews prove Paul’s story, they hardened their hearts, they chose ignorance, and now the tribune has become resolute to get the bottom of the matter.



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²² Up to this word they listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live.”
²³ And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, ²⁴ the tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by **flogging**, to find out why they were shouting against him like this.

Now this is where this story gets good if you like me are a problem solver, as in you don’t just accept what seems like a no-win situation. Paul, has kept his tongue, had chosen the right moment to be bold, it got him the rejection of his “brothers & fathers”, but the result of this is that the tribune has found it necessary to beat a confession out of him. A **flogging** by a Roman interrogator is not the usual whipping. It is what Jesus received before the crucifixion, it is done with a scourge/rod with several leather thongs that at the end are attached rough pieces of metal or bone. If one was not killed, you were most likely crippled for life. Paul has been beaten before multiple times, but not like this, this had a murderous quality to it.¹

Now most likely we will never find ourselves in such a dire straight, but all Christians from time to time, do find themselves against the wall and sometimes mistake their circumstances in life as fate as if there is nothing to be done about it. They become a lazy Calvinist (frozen chosen), decry God’s sovereignty over all things, and turn themselves over to become victims in this world OR in a moment of weakness they come to believe perhaps they deserve bad treatment.

For Paul, he was definitely a believer of God’s sovereignty in all things so why didn’t he just shut his mouth and go through this tragic ordeal? **Because it was born of the sinful desires of men and the devil and just because one believes in the sovereign and providential God of all things it does not mean that one should roll over and take a kick to the ribs.** Jesus allowed Himself to go through a false trial and an execution **but there were also so many times were people tried to harm Him and take His life of which He responded, “no one takes my life, I lay it down.”** ([John 10:18](#)). You see family

¹F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 420.



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the truth is you don't have to take persecution laying down, we shouldn't just accept the world's mistreatment without a counter. Because many times God wants to show the world His presence through His people when they take a stand for a Holy and Righteous God. For Paul, he still believed his path led to Rome, so this has become a game of wits and faith now, believing that there is more than laying down to die. Christian you were not meant to be a punching bag for no one, no there is an offensive side to suffering for Christ well.

Peter a few years later wrote in his epistle what Paul so valiantly portrayed for all believers to remember what to do when the world comes at you.

[GOSPEL]

1 Peter 3:14-16 ESV

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a **good conscience**, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

Conscience - (*syneidēsis*) the soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending one, condemning the other).

How does one get a good/clear conscience? You must accept that **all your sins** have been **atoned** for **by Jesus**.

1 Peter 1:18-19 ESV

¹⁸ knowing that you were **ransomed** from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the **precious blood of Christ**, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

A good conscience believes Jesus is the one that pays it all, therefore I don't have to accept without question the mistreatment for people's ignorance toward sin when they want you to pay for their conviction.



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A good conscience says you don't deserve the condemnation of the world for your choices no matter how they treat you.

A good conscience says that because Christ has paid it all then it is Christ that will define my innocence or guilt, not this world.

A good conscience frees one from the fear of earthly consequences because they are not tied to your worth, that is secured in the heavenly places for eternity.

And when you can think clearly without guilt from a good/clear conscience, then you can keep your wits when the world gets confusing, when the world attacks, giving you the opportunity perhaps to turn the tables.

[ILLUSTRATION]

I want to use an illustration here because I was reading something this week and it maybe think of Paul's situation as if he is viewing these encounters as a game. You know I believe Paul is a brilliant tactician, I said before when he came to believe that Rome is where he would end up, that he saw it as a **“check mate”** move for taking the Gospel into all the world. Well today I saw him again putting to work his cool, calm, calculating game skills but with an even more intense game than Chess, **UNO!** Yes, that game that has been destroying the peace and unity in homes across our land for over 5 generations now!

UNO is a game that if you play by the rules, you can figure out how to win most of the time. That's why I hate playing with my family, they all play by different rules, and then they bought this attack UNO game, that is only based on luck because you can go from one card to 8 in one shot! I hate it! But if you play UNO by the rules then you know when the right time is to play a Reverse/Skip to get out of a dangerous situation, when to throw down a Draw Two to punish an opponent, and when to play that dreaded Draw Four² which is the kill move that stops the enemy from going out. You see I saw Paul do this to his opponents this week, and every encounter he upped his play by playing a

² <https://boardgames.stackexchange.com/questions/42237/does-a-person-playing-an-illegal-draw-4-in-uno-still-get-to-pick-the-color#:~:text=NOTE%3A%20If%20you%20suspect%20that,4%20cards%20instead%20of%20you.>



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stronger card till in the end he cancelled out his torture and threat by keeping his cool and remembering he has a **GOOD/CLEAR CONSCIENCE**.

23 And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all **good conscience** up to this day.”

Paul’s ability to go through this trial came in each situation because he wasted no time about trying to figure out if he was doing the right thing or not, he was at peace with his motives, he knew Jesus’ will for His life, and he was confident in the outcome. Because of this Paul used the power of **The Big Reveal** of new information, like a discard when it was his turn, and he witnessed the HS controlling the communication. We are watching 1 Peter 3:14-16 play out as Paul masterfully blocks Satan and his schemes with each play, because you can’t out play God when it is His game!

Main Point:

**The boldness to speak for God comes from our
GOOD/CLEAN CONSCIOUS given by God.**

Today we will see this game of Paul play out like this. 1st we will see that Paul **REVEALS** his Roman Citizenship, that’s his **Reverse/Skip card** if you would. Then we will see Paul **REBUKE** the Hypocrisy of the High Priest, that would be his **Draw Two**. Then lastly, we see Paul cause a **RIFT** between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, when he throws out his **Draw Four** to finish the game. From these encounters we will learn how we too are to keep our cool, put faith in our ‘bought by Jesus, Good Conscious, so that when the time arrives, we too will have the words to say that will glorify Christ, and display to this world the foolishness of men that confounds the wise!

1. Paul REVEALS his Roman Citizenship.

25 But when they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?” **26** When the centurion heard this, he went to the tribune and said to him, “What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen.” **27** So the tribune came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” And he said, “Yes.” **28** The tribune answered, “I bought this citizenship for a large sum.” Paul said, “But I am a citizen by birth.”



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Now notice at what point Paul decides to play his first card. This man is cool and collective, he has waited to be tied up and stretched out. That right there shows me a man that is not afraid of conflict. How many of us would have been screaming bloody murder “wait, wait!” but not Paul, he adds to the suspense, he lets the tribune take his turn to make him think that he’s got Paul right where he wants him. That’s when he turns to the man and asks as if he doesn’t know if it is a fact or not, whether it is lawful for them to flog a Roman Citizen in this way ([Acts 16:37](#))? It’s like asking in the UNO game, “Hey when can I play this card again?”

So, the tribune was like, “Excuse me!?” and went to confront Paul. The tribune admits to having to buy his citizenship, which was recorded in history as a scandalous thing under the Emperor Claudius³, who later I believed that was one of the things that got him taken out by his fourth wife and niece Agrippina the mother of Nero. Paul though was born free, which means that either his father or grandfather was awarded citizenship based on merit, perhaps because of the family business of tent making for the Roman Army. Either way, Paul’s papers and lineage is well recorded and documented and could not be concocted. To flog a Roman citizen was illegal even in formal executions, that is how demeaning it was.

I also want to point out that Paul, as all Christians should be, was a critic and voice of conscience for the government. The devil loves to use the lie that Christians should not be involved in politics and that is the furthest thing from the truth. In the words of Tony Merida.⁴

Paul urged Christians to submit to the governing authorities as God’s minister of justice ([Rom 13:1-7](#)), but he also expected the government to exercise its duties rightly. Paul challenged those in power to wield their authority honorably. **This suggests there’s a difference between humbly suffering for Christ and being a victim of injustice.** We live in a land of laws, and if the laws protect us, then we should appeal to them. If these laws prevent us from following Jesus, then it’s better to obey God than man ([Acts 5:29](#)).

³ <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/unromantest/chapter/augustus/>

⁴ Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition/Exalting Jesus in Acts* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference Publishing, 2017), 349.



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In no way should we take from the government a false accusation which would seek to nullify the righteousness of Christ, nor should we quietly embrace those laws that come against the law of God. BUT to be able to speak into these things you have got to keep a level head, you must have a good conscious.

²⁹ So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

LP:

To live out the Sovereignty of God we are not to just accept the world’s false judgments.

Our nation may be on the brink of converting solely to paganism, but church let us never be quiet about it, let us proclaim boldly as citizens of the Kingdom of God, what our nation should and should not be doing. It may be offensive to some, but it is loving to all, and above all it shows that we love God the most. This was the path that Christ chose Himself, and so should we. Let us be a people not afraid to stand on the Truth, because that is when the HS will flip the table on our prosecutors. Paul has played his Reverse card on the Tribunal and now it was time for the next player's hand.

2. Paul REBUKES the Hypocrisy of the High Priest.

Paul Before the Council

³⁰ But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them.

Well, the tribune has to call a pass, and he waves Paul on to the next player. Where the temple sought to wash their hands of their former acolyte by locking him out of their courts when he should have been afforded their protection, the tribune has reopened them for session. That’s ok for it has been documented outside of scripture that Ananias was in the pockets of Rome, he was their man, and he was not above getting his hands dirty to get results. By that, I mean it is recorded he was violent and wicked man. Perhaps the tribune thought to get around his lack of ability to torture Paul by taking him to



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someone who could. So, Paul seeing he has the floor and is controlling the game somewhat he makes the first move.

23 And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all **good conscience** up to this day.”

Back to our main **point if you are going to be bold then you will need a good conscience**, the type of mentality that what you are about to say cannot be refuted because of your position of standing in the imputed righteousness of Christ. Well, let’s see how Ananias received that.

2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.

True to his reputation Ananias doesn’t even answer the charge of what Paul thought he could do or not do, but instead just has someone belt him right in the kisser. That’s the same tactic the world uses today, it seems that they don’t want to argue with a truth teller but instead they are ready to go to violent extremes. We can’t be surprised by that, when one chooses to ignore the presence of God in their lives, they definitely will not play the game the way you play it. Paul then retaliates in a dignified manner.

3 Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! That’s in reference most likely to an ancient tomb, where they would keep the outside fresh and clean with a limestone-based paint while on the inside there was only death. Jesus used this same reference to talk about the appearance of cleanliness among the Pharisees when He knew they were spiritually dead on the inside ([Matthew 23:27](#)).

Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?” **4** Those who stood by said, “Would you revile God’s high priest?” **5** And Paul said, “I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’”

Two things that Paul is doing here in light of his countermove. First, Paul is using the law to actually show that the HP was not a law follower, he was making himself out to be the better Jew. Second, he was dropping a Draw Two



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card on Ananias, a punishment for his actions, and Paul didn't even know he was doing it.

Leviticus 19:15-18 ESV

¹⁵“You shall **do no injustice in COURT**. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. ¹⁶You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD.

Paul condemns the High Priest for his actions as clearly stated as unjust in the Mosaic Law all the while displaying his humility by offering apologies about whom he spoke to. Paul shows his attitude/zealousness to the law, his desire to love God by the law, in contrast to Ananias' desire to only love himself above his brothers. As well, God has stored up his wrath against this false High Priest and puppet for Rome and it seems this may have been the straw to break the camel's back.

Paul did make a declaration in the name of God, that is no small thing. You were not to take the Lord's name in vain nor invoke His name in anything like an oath, curse, or a promise. BUT in a good conscience Paul invokes God's name in judgment **“God is going to strike you”** Ananias and guess what, that is exactly what happens. Ananias the following year due to his violent/corrupt actions was removed from his position as High Priest but still retained influence and power and basically became a mob boss collecting money to sell favors to Jews who could afford it, he was a racketeer. This behavior/sin was largely the factor that led the Jewish people to revolt. 66 AD a group of Jewish patriots led by his own son, Eliezar ben Hanania, began the first Jewish-Roman War.⁵ The result of that coup was Ananias' home was burnt down with him and his brother in it, thus ending the financial corruption in Jerusalem. This action though also led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. It seems that God used the treatment by Ananias to get the ball rolling on a prophecy his Son had declared ([Luke 21:5-38](#)).... Draw Two.

⁵https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ananias_son_of_Nedebeus#:~:text=He%20continued%20to%20officialiate%20as,the%20Great%20Revolt%20of%20Judea.



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It would do good to remember what Jesus has said, so that we may continue to be bold for Him when the time comes, even in the midst of violent overtones.

Luke 18:7

And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?

Paul remembered it and it empowered him to give the right word at the right time.

Romans 12:19 ESV

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

LP:

Having a Good Conscience with God allows you to proclaim the bold justice of God.

Right now, there are those in power over us that need to hear plainly about the injustice in our land. We have a government involved in racketeering itself selling votes to students by trying to pay off school debts, selling votes to minorities by changing laws like Title 9, selling votes to internationals by allowing them to seize control of public land, and selling votes to those here illegally by free living expense accounts, all in underhanded efforts to take control from law abiding citizens. Folks it’s not about a question of talking about politics from the pulpit **it’s about pointing out like Paul a great injustice**, and that type of brazen indifference to the law leads to revolts, because in the end it makes things worse off for everyone!

Instead let us, in the spirit of John the Baptist who sought to bring God’s Word to bear on his nation’s leaders, we have a chance to pray now, to speak out now against the corrupt, because those in power are all about trying to keep it and would rather have us quiet. Our efforts now in speaking out, praying against, and teaching our neighbor and the next generation could perhaps help our land forgo some revolution like behavior. Take heart and believe God will give us the word to be bold especially when we operate out of good conscience about why we are saying such things.

3. Paul cause RIFTS between the Sadducees and the Pharisees.



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⁶Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.”

Alright Paul sees a way to end this game, for he has had his say with Ananias, judgment has been passed, time to finish the game. He throws down his last big reveal, and plays his Draw Four, UNO, I’m out!

⁷And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

Paul plays his last card and says here’s the color you have to play, and then gets the Pharisees to do his dirty work because they believe the same thing.

1 Corinthians 15:14 ESV

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

And here’s why this matters, why all of life should be looked at in this way, why you should be bold, and this is what helps in having a clear conscience in declaring to people the TRUTH!

2 Corinthians 5:10 ESV

For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

That’s what it all comes down to this struggle even today with our current culture, there is an afterlife, there is a final day of judgment, and no one will escape that day. And here’s who is the author of that belief.

Matthew 12:36 ESV

I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, - Jesus



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LP:

A Good conscious can be birthed by being bold enough to share with your neighbor the truth about a final judgment.

Friends if you really love family and friends, if you really love your neighbor, if you really love your community, if you really love your nation, then please be Bold and have a good conscience about speaking out, for perhaps we can save some! But please know, be encouraged and informed of this fact - time will run out!

⁹Then a great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and contended sharply, "We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?" ¹⁰And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks.

[CHALLENGE]

The day is won, the game is over, and Paul stays in this world for another night. That's all we can hope for family, be bold in the face of discouragement, proclaiming boldly for Christ, thankful that we made it through another day, all to get up and do it all over again tomorrow. Don't get caught up in making plans all the time, God might call for your soul tonight! Instead live hard today for Jesus, and make much of Him, while you still have time.

Brothers and sisters let us live for Jesus while we still have today. Let us believe and fight for our good conscious for Jesus hath delivered it to us by His blood. Let us not listen to the lies of culture demanding us to make restitution for their made-up definitions of what privilege is. Let us not be silent when those in power threaten violence and coercion for their day of judgment is eternal but we may save some if we concede not. Be proud of your savior, enjoy your Salvation, live free from the guilt of sin, and proclaim the good news until your end or His return whatever may come first.



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[PRAYER]

[CALL TO OBEY]

Elder – Read

[COMMUNION]

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand

Elder – “Christians, what do you believe?”

[OFFERING+LAST SONG] –

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that has sovereignly allowed us to face our accusers so we may make much of Him, calling all to repentance.

Go in the name of the Son, our true ruler and emancipator making a way for sinners to experience freedom from the evil tyranny of men, and avenging all wrongs done to His people on that final day.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that convinces us of our good conscience helping us to believe we are free to speak out for Christ, now go and share this good news with others.