

¹ Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men *and* brethren, **I have lived in all good conscience** before God until this day."

Acts 23:1 (NIV) Paul looked straight at the **Sanhedrin** and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day."

The Sanhedrin is said to have consisted of seventy-one members, the high priest being president.
Easton's Illustrated Bible Dictionary:

The book of Acts describes how the Sanhedrin harassed and threatened the apostles. The healing of the man at the temple and Peter's sermon attracted the attention of the chief priests. Peter and John were called before the council and warned not to preach anymore in the name of Jesus ([Acts 4:5-21](#)). When the apostles continued to preach, the council had them arrested ([Acts 5:21,27](#)). The wise counsel of Gamaliel caused the council to release the apostles with a beating and a warning ([Acts 5:34-42](#)). Stephen had to appear before the Sanhedrin on charges that sounded like the false charges against Jesus ([Acts 6:12-15](#)).

After Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, the Roman commander asked the council to examine Paul to decide what was Paul's crime ([Acts 22:30; 23:28](#)). Paul identified himself as a Pharisee who was on trial for his hope of resurrection. This involved the council in a debate of the divisive issue of the resurrection ([Acts 23:1-9](#)). The chief priests and elders were part of a plot to have Paul assassinated as he was led to another hearing before the council ([Acts 23:13-15,20](#)).

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary.

**"good conscience" ---- One could have a good conscience and be wrong as Paul (Saul)
Acts 22:4-8 and Acts 26:9-11**

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

Ananias ---A high priest in Jerusalem from 47-59 AD. From Josephus ([Ant., XX, v, 2; Ant., XX, vi, 2; Ant., XX, ix, 2; BJ, II, xvii, 9](#)) He was a typical Sadducee, wealthy, haughty, unscrupulous, filling his sacred office for purely selfish and political ends, anti-nationalist in his relation to the Jews, friendly to the Romans. He died an ignominious death, being assassinated by the popular zealots (sicarii) at the beginning of the last Jewish war. In the New Testament he figures in two passages. (1) [Acts 23:1-5](#), where Paul defends himself before the Sanhedrin. The overbearing conduct of Ananias in commanding Paul to be struck on the mouth was characteristic of the man. Paul's ire was for the moment aroused, and he hurled back the scornful epithet of "whited wall." On being called to account for "reviling God's high priest," he quickly recovered the control of his feelings, and said "I knew not, brethren, that he was high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people." This remark has greatly puzzled the commentators. The high priest could have been easily identified by his position and official seat as president of the Sanhedrin. Some have wrongly supposed that Ananias had lost his office during his trial at Rome, but had afterward usurped it during a vacancy (John Lightfoot, Michaelis, etc.). Others take the words as ironical, "How could I know as high priest one who acts so unworthily of his sacred office?" (so Calvin). Others (e.g. Alford, Plumptre) take it that owing to defective eyesight Paul knew not from whom the insolent words had come. **Perhaps the simplest explanation is that Paul meant, "I did not for the moment bear in mind that I was addressing the high priest"** (so Bengel, Neander, etc.). (2) In [Acts 24:1](#) we find Ananias coming down to Caesarea in person, with a deputation from the Sanhedrin, to accuse Paul before Felix.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

³ Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, *you* whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?"

In asserting that God would smite Ananias, Paul was simply affirming the principle that conduct like that of Ananias would receive divine retribution. Ananias was a whitewashed wall - that is, a hypocrite, one whose outward appearance was only covering his inward rottenness. Paul elaborated on the charge of hypocrisy, pointing out that while Ananias purported to judge Paul on the basis of the Law, he himself violated the Law by ordering that Paul be smitten. The Law demanded justice, and to smite a man who had not been fairly tried and found guilty was unjust (Lev.19:15). **Truth Commentaries – Acts** Johnny Stringer pg. 477-478

⁴ And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

⁵ Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, '*You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.*' "

⁶ But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"

Acts 26:5 (NKJV) They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that **according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.**

⁷ And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided.

⁸ For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection--and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.

Acts 4:1-2 (NKJV) ¹ Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the **Sadducees** came upon them, ² **being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.**

⁹ Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God."

¹⁰ Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring *him* into the barracks.

¹¹ But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

¹² And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

¹³ Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy.

¹⁴ They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul.

¹⁵ Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near."

¹⁶ So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul.

¹⁷ Then Paul called one of the centurions to *him* and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him."

¹⁸ So he took him and brought *him* to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to *him* and asked *me* to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you."

¹⁹ Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?"

²⁰ And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him.

²¹ But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you."

²² So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded *him*, "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me."

²³ And he called for two centurions, saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the **third hour of the night**;

Acts 23:23 (NIV) Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, "Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at **nine tonight**.

²⁴ and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring *him* safely to Felix the governor."

FELIX --- a Roman procurator of Judea appointed by the emperor Claudius in A.D. 53. He ruled the province in a mean, cruel and profligate manner. His period of office was full of troubles and seditions. St. Paul was brought before Felix in Cæsarea. He was remanded to prison, and kept there two years in hopes of extorting money from him. [Acts 24:26, 27](#) At the end of that time Porcius Festus [[FESTUS](#)] was appointed to supersede Felix, who, on his return to Rome, was accused by the Jews in Cæsarea, and would have suffered the penalty due to his atrocities had not his brother Pallas prevailed with the emperor Nero to spare him. This was probably about A.D. 60. The wife of Felix was Drusilla, daughter of Herod Agrippa I., who was his third wife and whom he persuaded to leave her husband and marry him. **Smith's Bible Dictionary**

²⁵ He wrote a letter in the following manner:

²⁶ Claudius Lysias, To the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings.

The chief captain (chiliarch) who commanded the Roman troops in Jerusalem, and sent Paul under guard to the procurator Felix at Caesarea ([Acts 21:31-38](#); [Acts 22:24-30](#)). ----- Claudius Lysias, a Greek who, having obtained by purchase the privilege of Roman citizenship, took the name of Claudius ([Acts 21:31-40](#); [Acts 22:28](#); [Acts 23:26](#)). **Easton's Illustrated Bible Dictionary**:

²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman.

²⁸ And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council.

²⁹ I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains.

³⁰ And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him. Farewell.

³¹ Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought *him* by night to Antipatris.

ANTIPATRIS --- Place-name meaning "in place of father." City that Herod the Great built to honor his father Antipater in 9 B.C. It was 40 miles from Jerusalem and 25 miles from Caesarea on the famous Via Maris, "way of the sea," international highway. Roman soldiers taking Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea spent the night at Antipatris ([Acts 23:31](#)).

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary.

³² The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks.

³³ When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.

³⁴ And when the governor had read *it*, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that *he was* from Cilicia,

³⁵ he said, "I will hear you when your accusers also have come." And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

The **Praetorium** was originally the headquarters of a Roman camp, but in the provinces the name became attached to the governor's official residence. In order to provide residences for their provincial governors, the Romans were accustomed to seize and appropriate the palaces which were formerly the homes of the princes or kings in conquered countries. Such a residence might sometimes be in a royal palace, as was probably the case in Caesarea, where the procurator used Herod's palace ([Acts 23:35](#)).

Questions Acts 23

1. List the verse where Paul states, "**Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.**"

a. Explain how one might have a good conscience towards God and yet be unacceptable to Him.

Questions Acts 23

2. How did Paul create dissension between the Sadducees and the Pharisees?

3. Why did the commander instruct his men to take Paul to the barracks?

4. What did the Lord tell Paul?

5. What was the conspiracy devised against Paul and how did this information get to the commander?

6. How did the commander respond to the information he received concerning Paul?

7. Who was Felix and give a summary of the letter that was sent to him concerning Paul.

8. What point or points will you choose to remember about this chapter?