PAUL’S DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

**DATE**:

**TEXT: Acts 23:1-10**

**INTRODUCTION**

Review **vs. 22-30** of chapter 22

Chapter 23 records the Apostle Paul’s 2nd Defense of his faith before the Jews in Jerusalem

We found his 1st defense on the stairs just outside the castle

This time, Paul is brought from the Castle Antonia to the place where the Sanhedrin met, at this time (traditionally) located on Mount Zion

**I. PAUL STANDS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN – vs.1-10**

**Chapter 22:30 – *“On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them”***

**A. The Sanhedrin – v.1**

Who where the Sanhedrin?

They were the ruling Jewish religious body, consisting of 70 men

While Palestine was under Roman rule, this council ruled over all the internal affairs and religious matters

These were the Elders of Israel

They consisted of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, High Priest and Priests

They were aristocratic in nature

We find Christians being brought before this ruling council 4 times in the Book of Acts

**Acts 4:5-21, 5:21, 27-41, 6:12 -7:54** and in our text

**B. Paul’s Message**

This was one of his shortest

Keep in mind; he is not permitted by the circumstances to develop his argument

Paul makes 3 statements:

**1**. In **v.1** he says - ***“I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day”***

**2.** In **v.6** he says – ***“I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee”***

**3.** Finally he closes out **v.6** with this statement –

***“I am called in question…of the hope and resurrection of the dead”***

**C. A Good Conscience before God – v.1b**

***“And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day”***

Let’s look at this tremendous statement!

Paul says – ***“I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day”***

A statement like that only takes *a moment to say*

But the reality is that it takes *a Life time to live!*

**1. What is The “Conscience”?**

The conscience is that inner faculty of man (part of the soul) that discerns responsibility with reference to moral truth

**Romans 2:14, 15 – *“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:”***

 ***“Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and***

 ***their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;”***

**Genesis 2:17** and **Genesis 3:7** areperfect examples of the conscience

***“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”***

***“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons”***

**2. Is the Conscience a Reliable Guide?**

The answer is Yes and No!

Yes, in the sense that man inherently knows good and evil, right and wrong

I refer you back to **Romans 2:15**

No, in the sense that continual sinning and willful disobedience greatly harms the Conscience

Our past decisions and circumstances can also adversely affect the Conscience

→ The Conscience can be **‘Defiled’** –

**Titus 1:15 – *“Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled”***

→ The Conscience can be **‘Seared’** –

**I Timothy 4:2 – *“Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;”***

→ The Conscience can be **‘Weak’ –**

**I Corinthians 8:12 – *“But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ”***

The Conscience of man may become insensitive to sin through continual disobedience

**3. The Conscience needs Instruction**

Salvation first

**Hebrews 10:22a – *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,*”**

The Word of God exercises or strengthens the Conscience

**Hebrews 5:14 – *“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”***

In regard, the Bible is superior (and over-rules) the Conscience

The Conscience can be our guide to the extent that it is instructed by the Word of God

**I Corinthians 8:6, 7 *–“But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him”***

***“Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled”***

**I Corinthians 10:23-29**

**4. How do we receive a Good Conscience?**

Though Salvation

**Hebrews 10:22 – *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,”***

**5. What is the Response (answer) of a Good Conscience?**

Obedience, for the Christian, the first step of faith is obedience to the Lord in baptism

Look again at the end of **Hebrews 10:22**

***“and our bodies washed with pure water”***

**I Peter 3:21 – *“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:”***

**6. How do we maintain a Good Conscience?**

By staying true to the Word of God

**I Timothy 1:5, 19 – *“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:”***

***“Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:”***

**I Timothy 3:9 – *“Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience”***

Living by God’s Word

**Hebrews 13:18 – *“Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly”***

**II Corinthians 1:12 – *“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward”***

**7. Was Paul being Presumptuous in Acts 23:1?**

This is certainly a bold statement that Paul makes

I believe there are 2 probabilities here:

**First –** Paul is referring to his life since his salvation

This seems to be what he is saying in his later defense in **Acts 24:14-16**

**And**, Paul is referring also to his pre-salvation life

Paul indicates that he persecuted the church in Jerusalem in good conscience

**Acts 26:9 – *“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”***

**II Timothy 1:3 – *“I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;”***

**Philippians 3:4, 6, 7 – *“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:”***

***“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless”***

***“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ”***

If this is the case then we have a perfect example of a conscience uninstructed by the Word of God

It was done in ignorance of God’s truth

**I Timothy 1:13 – *“Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief”***

**D. Paul Smitten – v.2**

**E. Paul’s Rebuke – v.3**

**F. Paul is Rebuked – v.4, 5**

**G. A Divided Council – v.6**

**H. Paul’s Wisdom – v.6**

**I. The Dissension – vs.7-9**

**J. An unlikely Advocate – v.9**

**K. Paul’s Rescuers – v.10**

**II. THE LORD STANDS BY PAUL – v.11**

**III. THE CONSPIRACY TO MURDER PAUL – vs.12-15**

**IV. THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST PAUL FRUSTRATED – vs. 16-30**

**V. PAUL TAKEN TO CAESAREA – vs. 31-35**