

The Resurrection on Trial

January 6, 2007

Icebreaker: *What three things would you say are worth fighting for?*

We left Paul before a crowd of angry Jews who wanted to kill him for making the claim that God told him to go and preach to the Gentiles. In Acts 23 Paul gives a speech to the Sanhedrin. The result is not much better.

Acts 22:30-23:5

Ananias was a notorious high priest. By having Paul struck before being convicted he was violating the law of Moses. Ananias was well known for his greed, his using the temple to profit the Romans, and for using violence to get his way.

Was Paul's response to getting slapped out of line?

- Paul realized he wasn't supposed to talk to the high priest that way.
- At the same time they were violating and disrespecting a greater authority than themselves—God's law.

Is it ever appropriate to get angry over important issues?

- Jesus got angry in the temple.
- Some things should upset us. It is all how we deal with it.

Ephesians 4:26-27

Anger is a natural, God-given emotion. Just like with any other emotion when it gets out of hand it can become sinful. *How can anger give the devil a foothold?*

- It can make us irrational
- It can influence us to say things we wished we hadn't.

Paul says it is okay to be angry. *How do you keep from sinning when you are angry?*

Acts 23:6-11

Paul mentions the resurrection for two reasons:

1. It is the core of the message he has been sent to preach.
2. He knows that it is a hot button issue between the parties within the Sanhedrin—Pharisees and Sadducees.

The Pharisees believed in angels, spirits, and resurrection while the Sadducees did not. The argument intensifies when the Pharisees find Paul innocent, rationalizing that “a spirit or angel” may have spoken to him. That just threw fuel on the fire of the Sadducee disbelief toward such things. The focus shifted from whether or not Paul was guilty to disputing among the Pharisees and the Sadducees over the resurrection.

Why did the commander have to rescue Paul?

- The dispute became intense and they feared for his life.

- Also because he was a Roman citizen with certain rites. He was not allowed to be beaten before found guilty.

The resurrection is a hot-button issue even today. Christianity rises and falls on the resurrection. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, he was a liar and deceived many. If he did rise from the dead, nothing will ever be the same again. It has split families, friends, and co-workers. Your whole life depends on what you think about Jesus and the resurrection.

What makes it hard for some people to believe Jesus rose from the dead?

How does the resurrection give us hope even when we are threatened with death?

1 Cor 15:50-58

Victory comes through the resurrection. *What three responses does Paul say we should have in 1 Cor 15:58?*

- Stand firm, let nothing move you, and give yourself fully to the work of the Lord.

Because Paul believed in the resurrection he was able to do all three of these things. He didn't have to fear trials or Pharisees or rulers or kings. He knew there was more to the story than death.

God gives Paul assurance at just the right time. *What happened during the night to comfort and encourage Paul?*

- The Lord told him to have courage.
- He also reminded him of his mission—to preach in Rome about the resurrection of Christ.

Acts 23:12-24

As we saw before, Ananias was not afraid to use violence to get his way. God told him he would get to Rome and so the plan was foiled.

When was a time in your life you realized that it had to be God who kept you safe in a situation?

Acts 23:31-35

Paul is on a trip that will eventually take him to Rome so that he can carry out God's plan of preaching in Rome, the capital of the entire world of their day.

How does knowing God has a plan for you help the obstacles seem manageable?

Application

What trials are you facing that will require God's help to get through?

What areas of your life could lean on God a little more?

How can you more fully give yourself to the work of the Lord?