

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

“PAUL STANDS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN”

Big Idea: Believers never face any opposition without the hope of the resurrection and the comfort of the risen Christ.

For individual study or discussion

This is one of those passages that can lead any diligent student of God’s Word into, well, choose your metaphor: miry swamps? Thorny thickets? There is plenty of debate over whether Paul didn’t recognize or didn’t see the High Priest (was Paul looking in another direction or hampered by poor vision? Was Ananias not wearing his high priestly robes?). Was Paul angry when he called the high priest, “you whitewashed wall”? Righteously angry? Sinfully angry? And then, did Paul throw the assembly into an uproar because he was a brilliant tactician who shrewdly chose to bring up a contentious issue, or was he once again using every opportunity he was given to proclaim the wonder of the resurrection?

Whatever your (and scholars’) answers to these questions, the focus need not be on figuring out what ultimately may be impossible to determine. Even in a Bible story with unknowable details, we can still detect—and profit from—the unbroken thread in Luke’s narrative: the advancement of God’s Kingdom.

- 1) What was Paul’s role in God’s Kingdom?
 - What are we to make of Paul’s assertion that he had “fulfilled” his “duty to God in all good conscience to this day”? (23:1) How are we to understand it in light of both pronouncements like this one in Psalm 18—“For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I have not done evil by turning from my God. All his laws are before me; I have not turned away from his decrees. I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin.” (Ps. 18:21-23)—and the blunt assessment of every human in the book of Romans, “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.” (Rom. 3:10-11) See also 1 Cor. 4:1-5 to better understand how Paul viewed himself in relation to God.
 - As we pursue the continued advancement of the Kingdom, should we have as a goal to fulfil our duty to God in all good conscience? How can we go about doing that?
- 2) What do we learn in this passage about the role of Scripture in advancing God’s Kingdom? (It is obvious here and elsewhere that Paul possessed an impressive knowledge of Scripture.)
 - What knowledge most often springs to mind in Christians today?
 - If you are in a group, share the methods that have helped you to dwell more deeply in God’s Word. (The BBC estimated 10 years ago that some 257 commonly used idioms, like “salt of the earth,” entered the English language through the King James Version of the Bible. Its words permeated both the English language and Western culture. Is there a way for the Bible to be similarly pervasive and influential today in the church? In the secular world?)
- 3) Why is the resurrection at the center of the Gospel message? How do we share the importance of it today in a culture that doesn’t really care whether it happened or not? (See Acts 23:6 and 1 Cor. 15:12-20.)

DATE: January 17, 2021

SPEAKER: Brian/Frank

SERIES: Acts

PASSAGE: Acts 22:30-23:11

Family Dinner Table

When Paul appeared before the Sanhedrin (pronounced san-HEE-drihn—it functioned as sort of a Supreme Court), he told the leaders right off the bat that he had “fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.” (Acts 23:1)

If you listened to the sermon on this passage, can you summarize what the pastor said Paul meant? Was Paul saying that he had never done anything wrong? Or that he had always lived according to God’s commands?

In a Disney movie made in 1940, a good fairy presents a tiny helper named Jiminy Cricket to the wooden puppet named Pinocchio. Jiminy is supposed to guide Pinocchio to make good decisions. If you’ve seen the movie, you might remember the song Jiminy sings called “Give a Little Whistle.” (If you want to hear it, click [here](#).) In the song, Jiminy Cricket tells Pinocchio to “always let your conscience be your guide.”

Is that good or bad advice? Is that what Paul meant when he talked about his conscience (that his conscience had been his guide)? What ultimately guided Paul?

As you go through each day, should your conscience be your guide? (You may want to answer this with both a “yes” and a “no,” and then explain.)

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

On Point

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

City Church Manchester