

**July 31**

**Scriptures:** Read Acts 22 & 23

**Key Verse:** “I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead.” (Acts 23:6c NIV)

## **Overview**

Paul’s troubles in Jerusalem continued. Even though he was now in the care of the Roman commander, he still had to face the hostility of the people. This time it was the commander himself who was catalyst to the problem. He “wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews” (22:30a), so he “ordered” the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble “and brought Paul and had him stand before them” (v.30b, c).

Paul had no sooner begun his defense than Ananias, the high priest, ordered he be struck on the mouth. Paul reacted angrily (calling Ananias “a whitewashed wall!”), but then he apologized, asserting he didn’t realize that Ananias was the high priest. Then Paul takes a new tack. He knows the Sanhedrin is comprised of two sects, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. One of the major doctrinal disputes between them was the issue of resurrection—the Pharisees believed in it, the Sadducees didn’t. So Paul declares his identity, “I am stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead” (23:6). He doesn’t mention Jesus directly. He just highlights resurrection. This divides the court and we see the remarkable disintegration of this respected body into a raging mob, which might have dismembered Paul if the commander had not stepped in to protect him.

Chapter 23 continues with an account of a conspiracy to kill Paul, his safe transfer to Antipatris by night, and his ultimate imprisonment in Caesarea where he was to be tried before the governor Felix. Once again, his chief protector was Lysias, the Roman commander. The Lord used this Roman to ensure the apostle’s safety and the proclamation of his message to “higher” courts, both Jewish and echelons of the Roman world.

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, You said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.” We pray for Your strength to be upon all who suffer in this present time because of their witness for You. Help all of us believers to be strong in You. Amen.