

2nd DEFENCE SPEECH – COURAGE!
ACTS CH23:1-11

“It is easier to believe a lie that one has heard a thousand times than to believe a fact that one has never heard before.”

Robert Lynd (An Irish writer) Is it easier to believe a lie over truth? How much damage can lies do? How do we work out the truth from lies? When accusations are made against someone, what should we do? Ever heard of natural justice? It refers to **the basic fundamental principles of being treated fairly**. These principles include the duty to give someone a fair hearing; the duty to ensure that the matter is decided by someone who is impartial; and the duty to allow an appeal against a decision. In English Law, natural justice is technical terminology for ***the rule against bias and the right to a fair hearing***. While the term natural justice is often retained as a general concept, it has largely been replaced and extended by the general "duty to act fairly". [Wikipedia](#)



John Stott says “So far Luke has portrayed his hero on the offensive, taking bold initiatives under the leading of the Holy Spirit to evangelize most of Asia and Greece. But when Paul arrived in Jerusalem, his whole career abruptly changed. He was assaulted, arrested, bound and brought to trial. He found himself on the defensive. Following his three epic missionary journeys Luke describes the five trials he had to endure. The first was before a Jewish crowd at the Northwest corner of the Temple area (**22:1**), the second before the Supreme Jewish Council in Jerusalem (**23:1**), the third and fourth in Caesarea before Felix and Festus, who succeeded one another as the procurator of Judea (**24:1; 25:1**), and the fifth, also in Caesarea, before King Herod Agrippa 11 (**26:1**). ***These five trials, including in each case Paul's defence speech, together with the circumstances of his arrest (21:18), take up six chapters in our Bibles and nearly 200 verses.***”
(Cited in John Stott's Commentary on Acts pg 335)

SPEAKING AND ACTING RIGHTLY! V1-5

V1 - Paul starts his speech to the Sanhedrin with a description of his conscience – it is clear! He simply means this to be taken at face value, that he has not wilfully done anything he knew to be wrong, he is not claiming that he is not a sinner. At hearing this, the High Priest – Ananias, believes Paul is being arrogant and instructs those stood by him to strike him across the face!

V2-3 - The action commanded by the High Priest, was in direct violation to Jewish Law - “You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbour” Leviticus Ch19:15. Paul, understanding Jewish Law responds to him, calling out “God is going to strike you, you white washed wall (***“used in Ezekiel ChCh13:10-16 to portray something that looks stable, is about to collapse***)! Are you going to judge me according to the Law and yet contrary to the Law you order me to be struck.” Paul, not knowing it is the High Priest, is stating that he appears to be a strong wall, but is brushed in faint white paint, hiding how frail the wall really is! ***Paul was right!!!*** This particular High Priest ruled from A.D. 47-59, and was known for being unjust, a lover of money and for taking bribes! He was murdered by his own people in A.D.

66!

V4-5 – When Paul is informed about who the person was, he brings Scripture again to mind Ex Ch22:28 - “You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.” However, God did strike down the corrupt High Priest. Death is an appointment that for human beings:

1. Cannot be postponed!
2. Cannot be avoided!
3. Cannot be delayed!

Paul responded to the High Priest with a warning of divine judgement, echoing Jesus in Matthew Ch23:27-28! (Poor eyesight? - Gal Ch4:13-16 +Ch6:11)

SPEAKING AND ACTING WRONGLY! V6-9

Let's try and remember why Paul is on trial! ***The current lies relate to allegations that Paul was:***

1. teaching everyone everywhere, both Jews and Gentiles
2. to be against the Jewish people
3. to be against the Jewish Law
4. to be against the Jewish Temple
5. and for bringing Greeks into the Temple

V6 - But Paul, knowing his audience says “I'm on trial because of the hope and the resurrection of the dead”, he raises a theme which will be raised by him again, later on in:

- Ch24:14-16+21
- Ch26:6-8+22-23
- Ch28:20

Because he knows that the Pharisees and Sadducees disagree on this issue! ***What do we know about the Sadducees?*** The Sadducees were a small group of people with aristocratic and priestly influence, as they were the rich and land owners, who got their authority from the activities of the Temple. They did not usually get on with the Pharisees (Acts Ch23:7-8)! They held the majority

of membership within the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Council, but were not connected with the people because of their wealth, politics and support of the Roman's rule over them. They only held to the first 5 books of the Bible, did not believe in the resurrection (Matt Ch22:23) so that when you died, you died! They also did not believe in angels (Acts Ch23:7-8)! ***The Sadducees ignorance is two fold, firstly, with their lack of Biblical knowledge that affects their understanding of the future and secondly with their lack of Biblical experience of the power of God, that is affecting them directly, in the present!***

KNOW THE SCRIPTURES!

- Scripture says that heaven is a place! Jesus taught His disciples to pray “Our Father in heaven” Matt Ch6:9!
- Scripture says that Jesus “has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God” 1st Peter Ch3:22!
- Heaven is a place where God most fully makes known His presence!
- Heaven can only be known through the testimony of the Scriptures, this is why it is so often denied outside of evangelical circles!
- Scripture says that Jesus will prepare that place and take us to it, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” John Ch14:3!
- Scripture says that the earth and everything in it will be laid bare, 2nd Peter Ch3:10!
- Scripture says there will be a new heaven and a new earth “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea” Revelation Ch21:1!

KNOW THE POWER OF GOD!

- Scripture says “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” Matthew Ch22:32
- Present tense! God is the God of the living!
- How can this be, if they all died before Moses was born?
- Know the power of God!

- Scriptures says 1st Cor Ch15:20-23, 49-53 we will have new bodies, which will be imperishable!
- The fact that our new bodies will be “imperishable”, means that they will not wear out, grow old or be subject to any illness or disease!
- Scripture says our new bodies will shine like the sun Matt Ch13:43!
- Scripture says our new bodies will be raised in power 1st Cor Ch15:43, so that we will be able to have strength to do all that God wills!
- Scripture says our new bodies will be “spiritual” 1st Cor Ch15:44, raised to a degree of perfection that God had originally intended!
- Scripture says our new bodies, when Christ returns, will be like Christ “When He appears we shall be like Him” 1 John Ch3:2!

The Pharisees believed in the Resurrection, and Paul uses this fundamental difference for the furtherance of the Gospel! ***Luke is painting a clear picture for his reader Theo, and obviously for us, of the Christian and the Sanhedrin, because in every scene in both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, that takes place in the company of the Sanhedrin, has a negative outcome for Jesus and the His followers – Luke Ch22:66-Ch23:2; Acts Ch4:5-21; Ch5:27-41; Ch6:12-15 and here!***

SPEAKING AND ACTING ENCOURAGINGLY! V10-11

How has God used the Roman Tribune so far to help Paul?

1. Ch21:32 – Took soldiers and ran to Paul's aid!
2. Ch21:34 – Tried to ascertain the facts!
3. Ch21:35 – The soldiers carried Paul!
4. Ch21:40 – Gave Paul permission to speak!
5. Ch22:28 – Verified Paul's Roman Citizenship!
6. Ch22:30 – Organises for the right people to give evidence!

V10-11 – And now is used again as the violence between the two bickering parties is so great, that the Tribune thinks that if Paul is not rescued “he would be torn to pieces.” Along with God providing protection for Paul, God now stands by Paul's side and speaks directly to him! How can Paul be encouraged

by this message? By taking God at His Word!

“Courage is always fuelled by faith. Good courage is fuelled by faith in the ultimate good of the real God and all He promises to be for us in Jesus. Therefore, good courage must be *taken* — we must take hold of real promises given by the real God so that having done all, we can stand firm in the evil day (Ephesians 6:13). Come what may, we know that we “shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the [eternal] land of the living” (Psalm 27:13). Since all the promises of God are yes to us in Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20), we must not be cowards but *let our hearts take courage* by believing that what God has already promised is yes to us (Cited by Jon Bloom, *Desiring God*, July 4th 2020).” ***God tells Paul, “for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome”, what affirmation from our Lord!***

According to verses:

- Ch21:17 – Day 1 arrives in Jerusalem!
- Ch21:18 – Day 2 meets with James and the others!
- Ch21:26 – Day 3 Paul takes the men who have vowed!
- Ch21:27 – Day 3 Paul goes to the Temple!
- Ch22:30 – Day 4 Paul's second defence speech!
- Ch23:11 – Day 5 God speaks to Paul!

***Ch21:17 – 1 day; Ch21:18 – 2 days; Ch21:26+27 – 3 days;
Ch22:30 – 4 days; Ch23:11 – 5 days; Ch23:12+31 – 6 days;
Ch23:32+Ch24:1 – 7 days; Ch24:11 – 12 days!***

APPLICATION

- KNOW THE GOD OF THE SCRIPTURES!
- Develop a plan for reading the Bible!
- Out of a heart of devotion and grace, not legalism!
- Desire and welcome Good teaching!
- Time with the Lord, reading!
- Word for today!
- Word for you!