

February 8, 2026

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing
The Book of Acts Chapter 23,24
Passing the Torch: Paul's Farewell Tour Pt. 3
Integrity, Courage & Conviction Under Fire

PAUL'S THIRD JOURNEY



MAP: Today, we pick up where we left Paul and His Ministry Team left off at the end of Chapter 22. We've been tracing Paul's "Farewell Tour"—his final journey, marked by goodbyes, hardship, and the relentless advance of the gospel. In Part 1, we saw Paul's blueprint for authentic leadership. In Part 2, we watched him become "The Misunderstood Missionary," navigating riot and arrest. Now, in Acts 23–24, Paul's integrity is put to the ultimate test—not on the road, but in the courtroom and the prison cell. Paul's "Farewell Tour" is not just a journey to Rome, but a masterclass in leadership, faithfulness, and legacy. He takes a bold stand for Jesus with fear and with a sense of Integrity, Courage and Conviction.

This past Sunday night on national TV a Singer by the name Jelly Roll showed Integrity, Courage and Conviction in his acceptance speech for the Best Contemporary Country Album. Let's listen as we set the stage for a previous display of Integrity, Courage and Conviction in Acts 23, 24 by the Apostle Paul. Listen to Jelly Roll.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdoMOENFDKQ>

Today, we see Paul's integrity tested in the crucible of accusation, danger, and waiting. As a refresher, Paul had spent the last few months visiting all the places where he had started churches and ministered. The church members at each place was joyful to see Paul but saddened to know he was heading to Jerusalem and would never be seen by them again. It was a bittersweet time. He arrived in Jerusalem, met with the Church Leaders (James etc) and they came up with a plan to try to make peace with the Jewish leaders who had heard rumors (false ones, or at the least grossly misunderstood ones) that Paul was advocating abandoning the Law of Moses and teaching against Judaism. This 'peace pipe' strategy backfires and Paul gets arrested by the Romans under pressure from the riots of the Jewish religious community. The Romans were planning to have him flogged to find out the truth but Paul pulled the "Roman Citizen" card and was granted a chance to 'confront his accusers'.

Today our main focus is on Chapters 23 & 24, but let's reread the last verse of 22 to set the stage as we see Paul's '**Integrity Under Fire**'.

Acts 22:30... Now on the next day, wanting to know for certain why Paul had been accused by the Jews, he (Roman Commander) released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and he brought Paul down and placed him before them.

Acts 23 Context

The setting is the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish council in Jerusalem, composed of 71 members including the High Priest, elders, and scribes. This council was sharply divided into two main parties. The Sadducees, an aristocratic and priestly group, accepted only the five books of Moses (the Torah) as authoritative Scripture. Consequently, they rejected the concepts of resurrection, angels, spirits, and the afterlife. In contrast, the Pharisees, who were more popular with the common people, accepted the entire Old Testament and a body of oral tradition. They staunchly believed in the resurrection of the dead, angels, and spirits, a hope that was central to their theology and expectation of a coming Messiah. This deep, irreconcilable theological rift is the key Paul uses to disrupt the trial. <https://jegm.org/bible-study/acts-23/>

Paul's testimony before the Sanhedrin highlights the sharp divide within Judaism and demonstrates his unwavering focus on the resurrection as the core of his faith and Pharisaic hope. Paul's response in Chapter 23 showcases God's sovereignty, where divine intervention, through a direct promise to Paul, works in concert with human actions—including Paul's strategic defense, a young relative's vigilance, and the self-serving interests

of Roman authorities—to protect His messenger and ensure the gospel's advance toward Rome. (jegm)

Paul's story shows us integrity, courage and conviction to do what's right, even when it's hard or when no one else is watching. Like Paul, we can trust God to be with us in every trial and every waiting room.

Paul: Integrity, Courage & Conviction Under Fire

(Acts 23–24, summary story)

Paul stood in front of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court in Jerusalem. He looked at the leaders and said, **“Brothers, I have always tried to do what’s right before God.”** The high priest didn't like this and ordered someone to hit Paul in the mouth! Even then, Paul didn't lose his cool. He realized the council was split between Pharisees and Sadducees, so he said, **“I’m on trial because I believe in the resurrection of the dead!”** Suddenly, the room erupted in argument. The Roman commander, afraid Paul would be hurt, quickly took him away to safety. That night, as Paul sat in the barracks, Jesus appeared to him and said, **“Take courage! Just as you have spoken about me in Jerusalem, you will also speak about me in Rome”**. Paul knew God was still with him. Meanwhile, a group of forty men made a secret plan. They promised not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. But God was watching over Paul. Paul's young nephew heard about the plot and hurried to warn him. The Roman commander listened to the warning and decided to protect Paul. In the middle of the night, he sent Paul to Caesarea with 270 soldiers—an entire army to keep him safe!

In Caesarea, Paul was brought before Governor Felix. The Jewish leaders came with a fancy lawyer and accused Paul of causing trouble. Paul calmly defended himself, saying he believed in God and the resurrection, but he hadn't broken any laws.

Felix was interested in what Paul had to say, so he kept Paul under house arrest. For two years, Paul waited. During that time, he often talked to Felix and his wife about faith, righteousness, and self-control. Felix was afraid of Paul's message, but he also hoped Paul would offer him a bribe to get out of prison. Paul never did. Even though Paul was stuck waiting, he never gave up his faith or his integrity. He trusted God's plan, knowing that his "farewell tour" wasn't over yet—God still had work for him to do in Rome.

LESSONS ON INTEGRITY

- **Integrity is Steadfast, Not Situational:**

Paul's declaration, "*I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day*" (Acts 23:1), shows that true integrity is rooted in a transparent, consistent relationship with God. He refused to compromise his values, even when falsely accused or pressured to bribe his way out of prison (Acts 24).

- **The Lighthouse Principle:**

Like a lighthouse battered by storms but never extinguished, Paul's unwavering integrity became a guiding light for others, especially during seasons of injustice or waiting.

LESSONS ON COURAGE

- **Speaking Truth With Courage:**

Paul demonstrated remarkable courage by standing before the Sanhedrin and Roman officials, boldly proclaiming his faith even after being struck for his words. He didn't retreat or water down his message.

- **Divine Encouragement:**

When Paul was at his lowest, the Lord stood by him and said, "*Take courage...*" (Acts 23:11). This reminds us that God's presence fuels our courage, especially when facing hostility or danger.

- **Seizing the Platform:**

Paul saw every trial as a divine appointment. Instead of focusing on self-defense, he used his circumstances as opportunities to share the gospel with people who might never have heard it otherwise.

- **Biblical Examples:**

This reminds me of a courageous woman in the Old Testament named Esther. In *Chapter 4:14,16... For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" Then Estehr sent this message:*

"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

And don't forget Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

And the courage of Stephen, the 1st Martyr.

LESSONS ON CONVICTION

- **Trusting God's Hidden Hand:**

Paul's conviction was anchored in God's sovereignty. Whether through his nephew's intervention or the Roman escort, Paul trusted that God's mission would not be stopped by human schemes.

- **Consistency in the Message:**

Even when speaking to powerful and potentially dangerous leaders like Felix, Paul's conviction didn't waver. He boldly spoke about "*righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come*" (Acts 24:25), even when it made his audience uncomfortable.

- **Faithfulness in the Silence:**

Paul's two years in prison were marked by quiet, persistent faithfulness. Sometimes, the greatest acts of conviction are not dramatic, but are found in steadfastly living for Christ while waiting for the next door to open.

Summary:

Acts 23 and 24 teach us that integrity means doing what's right, no matter the cost; courage means standing firm in the face of hostility, fueled by God's presence; and conviction means trusting God's plan and remaining faithful, even in seasons of waiting or uncertainty. When we live this way, our lives become a "lighthouse" that guides others and keeps the torch of faith burning bright.

Think About This:

- Where is your integrity being tested? In the workplace, at home, in seasons of waiting?
- How can you, like Paul, maintain a clear conscience before God even when misunderstood or mistreated? Like Paul, we are called to carry the torch of faithfulness, even when it costs us comfort or reputation.
- The mission of God is not hindered by our circumstances—He is at work, even behind the scenes. Even in the waiting and times when things are confusing.

Take-Away:

Paul's story in Acts 23–24 reminds us: the torch of the gospel is passed not just through bold words, but through unwavering integrity, courage and conviction under fire. May we, too, be found faithful—trusting God's hidden hand and shining as witnesses, even in the waiting.

Acts 23 & 24 in full follows:

Paul before the Council

23 Now looking intently at the Council, Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived my life with an entirely good conscience before God up to this day.” ² But the high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law, order me to be struck?” ⁴ But those present said, “Are you insulting God’s high priest?” ⁵ And Paul said, “I was not aware, brothers, that he is high priest; for it is written: ‘YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.’” ⁶ But Paul, perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, *began* crying out in the Council, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!” ⁷ When he said this, a dissension occurred between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸ For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. ⁹ And a great uproar occurred; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and *started* arguing heatedly, saying, “We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” ¹⁰ And when a great dissension occurred, the commander was afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, and he ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks. ¹¹ But on the following night, the Lord stood near him and said, ***“Be courageous! For as you have testified to the truth about Me in Jerusalem, so you must testify in Rome also.”***

A Conspiracy to Kill Paul

¹² When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and put themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat

nor drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³ There were more than forty who formed this plot. ¹⁴ They came to the chief priests and the elders and said, “We have put ourselves under an oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ Now therefore, you and the Council notify the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to investigate his case more thoroughly; and as for us, we are ready to kill him before he comes near *the place*.”

¹⁶ But the son of Paul’s sister heard about their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷ Paul called one of the centurions to himself and said, “Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him.” ¹⁸ So he took him and led him to the commander and *said, “Paul the prisoner called me over to him and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.” ¹⁹ The commander took him by the hand, and stepping aside, *began* to inquire of him privately, “What is it that you have to report to me?” ²⁰ And he said, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him. ²¹ So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are in hiding to ambush him, and these men have put themselves under an oath not to eat or drink until they kill him; and now they are ready and waiting for assurance from you.” ²² Then the commander let the young man go, instructing him, “Tell no one that you have notified me of these things.”

Paul Moved to Caesarea

²³ And he called to him two of the centurions and said, “Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen.” ²⁴ *They were* also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor. ²⁵ And he wrote a letter with the following content: ²⁶ “Claudius

Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings.²⁷ When this man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, after learning that he was a Roman.²⁸ And wanting to ascertain the basis for the charges they were bringing against him, I brought him down to their Council;²⁹ and I found that he was being accused regarding questions in their Law, but was not charged with anything deserving death or imprisonment.³⁰ When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you.”³¹ So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.³² But on the next day they let the horsemen go on with him, and they returned to the barracks.³³ When these *horsemen* had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.³⁴ Now when he had read *it*, he also asked from what province *Paul* was, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia,³⁵ he said, “I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive as well,” giving orders for Paul to be kept in Herod’s Praetorium.

Paul before Felix

24 Now after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and an attorney *named* Tertullus, and they brought charges against Paul to the governor.² After Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began accusing him, saying *to the governor*, “Since we have attained great peace through you, and since reforms are being carried out for this nation by your foresight,³ we acknowledge *this* in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness.⁴ But, that I may not weary you further, I beg you to grant us a brief hearing, by your kindness.⁵ For we

have found this man a public menace and one who stirs up dissensions among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.⁶ And he even tried to desecrate the temple, so indeed we arrested him.⁸ By interrogating him yourself concerning all these matters, you will be able to ascertain the things of which we are accusing him.”⁹ The Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so.¹⁰ And when the governor had nodded for him to speak, Paul responded: “Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense,¹¹ since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship.¹² And neither in the temple did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city *itself*.¹³ Nor can they prove to you *the things* of which they now accuse me.¹⁴ But I confess this to you, that in accordance with the Way, which they call a sect, I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and is written in the Prophets;¹⁵ having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.¹⁶ In view of this I also do my best to maintain a blameless conscience *both* before God and before *other* people, always.¹⁷ Now after several years I came to bring charitable gifts to my nation and to present offerings,¹⁸ in which they found me *occupied* in the temple, having been purified, without *any* crowd or uproar. But *there were* some Jews from Asia—¹⁹ who ought to have been present before you and to have been bringing charges, if they should have anything against me.²⁰ Or *else* have these men themselves declare what violation they discovered when I stood before the Council,²¹ other than in regard to this one declaration which I shouted while standing among them, ‘For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today!’”

²² But Felix, having quite accurate knowledge about the Way, adjourned them, saying, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case.” ²³ He gave orders to the centurion for Paul to be kept in custody and *yet* have *some* freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from providing for his needs. ²⁴ Now some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla his wife, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him *speak* about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and responded, “*Go away for now, and when I have an opportunity, I will summon you.*” ²⁶ At the same time he was also hoping that money would be given to him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and talk with him. ²⁷ But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul imprisoned.