



SoulShare

May 14, 9:00—10:30 am Breakfast & Discussion

Paul's Nephew

I better not give you my name because my dad might get in trouble. You see, he works for the Sanhedrin and I help out. Cleaning the meeting rooms, taking out the trash, stuff like that. And I hear things. I'm kind of interested in finding out stuff. I sometimes tell my parents what I know, not all the time, but sometimes. My mother says I shouldn't be listening to things not meant for me. My father says maybe I will be a lawyer or a spy – something shady, anyway. Then he always laughs and my mom frowns and says, "Boys!"

Well we were in the middle of our routine when there was suddenly an emergency meeting of the Sanhedrin. It was called by the Roman commander concerning a man they arrested in the Temple. When I heard who it was, I was shocked – it was Paul, my mother's brother! So, I really had to find out about that. I knew he was a leader of the Christians and travelled all over the world. My mother believed what he preached. My dad just said, "The Sanhedrin do not believe in his teachings."

I found a place where I could hear without being seen. My father had left to clean other parts of the building. Things were getting pretty heated in the assembly chamber. I heard the sound of a slap. Then Paul's voice, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall!" Then some disputing back and forth. Then Paul saying, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest."

Wow! This was getting interesting ... and dangerous, especially for Paul but, I guess, for me too. Paul was allowed to make his case. What he said was, "I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead." And there was a great uproar and I remembered what my father had told me, that there were two parties, the Sadducees who did not believe in resurrection and Pharisees who did. Dad also had said that if Paul wasn't doing good things, he would have been a great lawyer!

Those dignified gentlemen acted like the spectators at a chariot race and Roman troops were called out to end the meeting and take Paul to safety. Whew! This really got my interest up and I wondered what would happen next. For some reason I showed up early the next morning. I don't usually get up early and I was there before my dad. I heard whispering. I made sure I was hidden but moved closer to get the whole conversation. What I heard was shocking. They were planning to kill Paul. In fact, 40 of them vowed to not eat or drink until Paul was dead. They would ask that Paul be brought back for questioning and kill him on the way.

I knew I had to do something. Since I was family, I was allowed to see Paul in the Roman army barracks where he was placed for safe keeping. I told him everything. He called over one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him."

The commander was obviously a high-ranking member of the nobility, but he was very nice to me. He took my hand, brought me aside and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?" I told him, "The Jews have

agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. Don't give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request."

The commander dismissed me and said, "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me." He turned to two of his centurions and ordered them, "Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight."

As you can guess, there were 40 very hungry men who did not kill Paul. I wonder if they broke their vow or starved. Actually, I broke a vow -- to not tell anybody. It was much later when it no longer made a difference and Dr. Luke was asking me about the time Paul was before the Sanhedrin. Well, I told Dr. Luke the whole story. I am pretty good at remembering things, except doing my chores at home. Well, I have to say, it isn't really fair that I should have to work at home when I clean up at the Sanhedrin. Actually, maybe I should study, remember my lessons and then I could get a job where I didn't have to clean things.

Acts 22 -- 24

Paul's Nephew Discussion

Remember that these monologues are essentially historical fiction, based on the Scripture but filling in plausible subjective details, both emotional responses and motivations. Your first task is to decide if they are reasonable.

If you read about a situation like this in the newspaper, would it be easy to consider it an incredible co-incidence?

Do you think it was a coincidence?

What are the characteristics of people who dismiss it as chance and those who see it as the providence of God?

Does this episode give any insight into the way God sometimes works?

Why might God want to include a young person in the carrying out of a significant responsibility?

Why was it wise for Paul to have send the boy to talk directly to the commander?

Do boys often fantasize about having a secret mission?

Would this be something the young man never forgot?

How would it affect his attitude towards his uncle Paul and his ministry?

Might his parents have reminded him that he helped save the life of the great missionary?

Imagine the conversations among the members of the Sanhedrin after their plot failed.

How do you suppose they rationalized breaking their oath?

Might they have realized that this was not just a result of poor planning but an example of Divine intervention?

What was likely the effect on the Roman commander?

Does God sometimes allow things to happen, or "almost happen," to show us how He is working behind the scenes?