

Acts 23:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

Analysis

Revilest thou God's high priest? (λοιδορεῖς, loidoreis, to insult/revile)—The bystanders rebuked Paul for calling Ananias a 'whited wall' (v. 3), considering this disrespectful to the high priest's office. Their question appeals to religious propriety even while tolerating judicial injustice—Ananias had ordered Paul struck illegally, violating Roman and Jewish law by punishing before conviction. The irony is profound: they defended the dignity of an office occupied by a corrupt man who commanded lawless violence.

This confrontation reveals tension between respecting God-ordained authority and confronting its abuse. Paul's bold denunciation echoed Jesus calling Pharisees 'whitewashed tombs' (Matthew 23:27). The Greek present tense suggests ongoing reviling, implying Paul's statement was seen as sustained disrespect rather than momentary reaction.

Historical Context

Ananias son of Nedebaeus served as high priest AD 47-59, known for greed and violence. Josephus records his corruption and theft of tithes from common priests. He was later assassinated by sicarii at the war's outbreak (AD 66). The Sanhedrin setting required decorum, making Paul's outburst shocking to observers.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you balance respect for authority with obligation to confront injustice and corruption?
2. When does defending institutional dignity become complicity with institutional sin?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	δὲ	παρεστῶτες	εἰπον,	Τὸν	ἀρχιερέα	τοῦ	θεοῦ
G3588	And	they that stood by	said	G3588	high priest	G3588	God's
G1161		G3936	G2036		G749		G2316

λοιδορεῖς

Revilest thou

G3058