

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul's First Defense for The Gospel **Acts 21:37 - 22:21**

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: In this message we examine the testimony of Paul. This is the first of several testimonies as Paul moves toward Rome and prison for the Name of Jesus.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Acts 21:37 - 22:31.
- B. When we left off last week we saw Paul being attacked by Jews at the temple and he was rescued by Roman soldiers.
- C. The barracks mentioned in vs 34 is what is called Antonia Fortress.
 - 1. It was name in honor of Mark Antony, the great leader of Rome.
 - 2. It was attached to the NW corner of the temple and was an important part of the trial of Jesus and history of the very beginnings of the Church.
 - 3. It is here, on the steps of the fortress we find Paul bound hand and foot, with a angry mob at the foot of the stairs, that we pick back up with this fascinating story.
- D. Paul desires to speak to those attacking him (37-40).
 - 1. First, instead of hate and vitriol, Paul shows desire to reach his attackers with the truth and especially the gospel.
 - 2. Second, Paul is working within the political/power structures, rather than rebelling against them.
 - 3. Paul shows wisdom here while under great pressure.
 - a. When Paul talked to the commander he spoke in Greek, which would be the language of the Roman officials in the Mediterranean area.
 - b. Paul then gives the commander a quick biographical sketch.
 - (1) He is first and foremost a Jew. Paul never shies away from that fact, even though it creates problems with both Jew and Gentile.

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- (2) From Tarsus, which is not a backwater city. This city was a free city awarded that freedom by two different Roman emperors.
 - (3) (He is also a Roman citizen but he doesn't use that yet. He chooses to keep that information to himself for the time being.)
 - (4) Being a citizen of Cilicia, specifically Tarsus is enough of an honorable background. So here we see Paul using his nationality as a tool to speak as well.
 - (5) And with respect to the commander he asks for permission to speak.
- c. But when he speaks to the people he shifts his language.
- d. Luke then records the reaction of the people when they hear Hebrew.
 - (1) They quiet down. And now they begin to hear rather than shout and react.
 - (2) A simple lesson here is that you need to be able to be heard if you want to bring the gospel to people. You need to meet them where they are, not where they ought to be.
 - (3) Give a moment to consider what your personal mind set would be if you were in Paul's place. You literally were snatched from a severe beating and likely death. And you have a chance to talk to those same people. Would your desire be to speak grace through the gospel?
- E. Well, Paul has the soldiers protecting him and the people quieted down, so now he can choose to tell them what he thinks is most important.
 - 1. And that is exactly what he does, he tells them his testimony. But this is not the sort of testimony you might share over coffee where someone asks you to talk about yourself.
 - 2. Paul tells them how a pharisee who hated the Christian faith is now a man who seeks to tell everyone about this Jesus who is the Messiah.

II. Paul's testimony:

- A. His birth and pedigree (3).

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1. He was born a Jew in Tarsus. That part we already know. The fact he was born outside of Jerusalem could mean he was not as committed of a Jew.
 2. But he was not raised in Tarsus, a Gentile city, but in Jerusalem itself. The holy city of God.
 3. Trained by Gamaliel.
 - a. This is key for Gamaliel was a famous rabbi. This means little to you but it gives a lot of information to these people.
 - b. This is a highly trained, devout Jew. He knew the Law of Moses. He loved the Law. He obeyed the Law in every way. He was zealous for God, just like they were acting.
- B. His hatred for the followers of Jesus Christ “the Way” (4-5a).
1. His actions went far beyond that vast majority of these people who were screaming for his blood.
 2. He had actively persecuted the believers (4).
 3. His actions can be verified not by word of mouth but by the High Priest and Council of the elders (5).
 4. So what happened to him?
- C. His divine encounter (5b-8).
1. He headed toward Damascus to believers who were there so as to capture them and bring them to Jerusalem. In other words, he went way above what many others did. He was even willing to travel to find Jews who had converted.
 2. Here we read again of his conversion (6b-8).
 3. It is here, in that moment, that Paul realized that it was not those who followed Jesus who were the rebels and blasphemers.
 - a. He was the blasphemer. He was the one who did not rightly believe.
 - b. What a massive mind shift that happened in that moment. It was an utter demolition of everything he had based his life upon.
 - c. It boggles my mind to imagine the rush of thoughts going through his mind. The shock and the horror of what he has been doing.
 - d. It is here that Paul converted to Jesus as his Lord. This is not just a cheap statement like “sir.”

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D. The outcome of his encounter (10-11).

1. And here we see the first fruit of believing in Jesus as his Lord and Savior (10). One cannot come by faith to Jesus without it resulting in a change of thinking and living.
2. He is to go to Damascus still (10b), but not as a persecutor of the Church. But as a brand new, fully humbled, disciple of Jesus Christ. It is there that he will learn more of what Jesus has for him.
3. Now hear me well here. A false convert, an almost Christian would hear these words and want more information.
4. He describes Ananias as a devout man by the standard of the Law (12).
5. His sight is restored by Ananias (13). That is all. No emphasis upon this miracle because it is not important to the main point.

E. Ananias' declarations and instructions (14-16).

1. This is key and is the focus of this whole testimony of Paul's. He has worked to tell the story in such a way as to bring them to this point.
2. The God of Israel has chosen Paul (14).
 - a. This is the sovereign work of God, not a human invention by Paul. God, YHWH, has determined that Paul would see Christ, the Righteous One, and to hear from Him.
 - b. This title, "Righteous One" is not just a random name. it is a messianic title out from Isaiah 53:11.

He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. (3-4)

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our peace fell upon Him, And by His wounds we are healed.

All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But Yahweh has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. (5-6)

But Yahweh was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If You would place His soul as a guilt offering, He will see His seed, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of Yahweh will succeed in His hand. (10)

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As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge **the Righteous One**, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. (11)

3. All of these Jewish men would know that title. All of them would know that it is a messianic passage, testifying of the saving work of their Messiah.

F. Such good news, is it not?

III. Conclusion.

A. And now Paul brings this all up to the current situation (17).

1. Here we find out that he had a vision while he was at the Temple. This would have been while he was offering a sacrifice after waiting the required days for purification.
2. This is the one where he took four men with him who were finishing their vows, and he went and paid the fees for them as well. All of this publicly done.
3. The vision was straightforward. Jesus told him to leave Jerusalem because the people would not accept his witness.

B. Some lessons here:

1. First, your reputation and actions prior to believing in Jesus means nothing. It does not give you street cred. It does not store up some good will for later. So do not count on it for it does not matter.
2. Second, if you take Jesus' words in vs 21 all by themselves then you could interpret this is a wonderful promise of a fruitful ministry. But it actually meant that Paul would go far away and preach the gospel to many Gentiles. But most of that time would be in prison.
3. Being a disciple of Jesus means that this world will hate you.
4. Being a disciple of Jesus means that you will lose friends over Jesus.
5. But being a disciple of Jesus also means that you have eternal life, a life without sin and death. Forgiveness of sin. A cleansed conscience. A new, eternal family. No longer enslaved to sin but free to obey and enjoy your Creator and Savior forever.

Benediction

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing the good news of Jesus Christ, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen