

Acts: The Gospel Gone Viral
Lesson 44 “Paul’s Defense in Jerusalem”

I. We have been studying through *Acts* and how the gospel went viral through various revivals in the first century. This is what caused the gospel to spread so rapidly in the first century.

A. We are currently studying Paul’s ministry in Jerusalem. As we’ve studied, Paul was in Jerusalem because of his disobedience to the call of God on his life to go to the Gentiles. He also ignored 2 prophetic words that told him if he went to Jerusalem, he would suffer.

1. I love this story because this is where a lot of us live. We disobey and miss God’s best and have to figure out what to do next.
2. Today, we are going to see Paul begin to share his testimony. Paul didn’t let his hardship keep him from doing what the Lord has called us all to do, which is to be a light in any situation we are in (whether of God’s will or our own making).

II. Paul’s Defense in Jerusalem - We are going to pick up the story from where the Jewish mob begin to beat Paul in the temple and the Roman centurion had to carry him to safety.

A. Acts 21:37-40 Paul Requests to Speak

1. Paul asked the commander to speak to the crowd, while he is being led to safety. Interestingly, the commander thinks Paul is an Egyptian who had stirred up a rebellion and led 4,000 assassins out of the wilderness. Josephus records of such an event.
2. One of the lessons we need to learn from this is Satan will often seek to bring lies and accusations against those who proclaim the name of Jesus. It comes with the territory. Examples include Martin Luther, George Whitfield, John Wesley, William Seymour, Bill Johnson, Andrew Wommack, Joseph Prince, etc.
3. When the commander realizes Paul can speak Greek, he gives him the opportunity to share.

B. Acts 22:1-23 The Power of a Testimony Paul doesn’t just share theological evidence to make his case for Christ. He shares his personal testimony of how he met Jesus and how Jesus changed his life.

1. Good theology isn’t wrong. We’ve studied a lot of great theology in this series, but theology without a transformed personal experience is incomplete.
2. This is why I share so many testimonies. The word testimony comes from a Hebrew word that means to do again. This means when we share our testimony we are actually inviting the Holy Spirit to do the same kind of work again. ex: Keith sharing about God healing his eyes earlier this year.

3. *Verse 3* Paul connects with his audience. He learned at the feet of the great Jewish scholar Gamaliel. He's trying to communicate he knows the law to and gets where they are coming from. ex: parroting in sales - build rapport.
4. *Verses 4-5* This story is amazing because Paul is so fired up for the law He's trying to kill Christians. This means just being passionate isn't enough. We must know truth. ex: LGBTQ and Candice Cameron
5. *Verses 6-9* say that Saul fell to the ground and was trembling in the *Acts 9* account. Do you know why? He had grown up under the law for all of his life. It was the life that was causing him to want to arrest and kill people because that's what he thought God was doing. Now when God confronts him in a dramatic way, guess what Saul thinks is about to happen to him? **We often conform God into our image instead of being transformed into His. That's what Saul did. He's better than we think so we need to change the way we think.**
6. *Verses 10-16* I think it's interesting that Paul includes the part about his healing in his testimony. It wasn't essential by human reasoning. He could have just said he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, but the part about his healing shows the Jesus wants to make us whole spirit, soul, and body. Healing is essential to the gospel! It's the dinner bell that calls people to Jesus.
7. *Verses 16-21* Paul returned to Jerusalem about three years after his conversion (*Galatians 1:18-19* and *Acts 9:26-30*). Paul is praying and falls into a trance.
 - a. Trance is *EKSTASIS* in Greek. It means "a displacement of the mind, i.e. bewilderment, 'ecstasy. This establishes that dramatic encounters where people fall out in the spirit is a real thing.When Paul is in this trance God tells Paul to leave Jerusalem because they won't receive his testimony concerning him. This is basically what we will see throughout Paul's time in Jerusalem. God then sent him to the Gentiles who did receive Paul's testimony. We need to go where we are sent.
8. *Verses 22-24* Paul's testimony isn't received and the Jews declare he should die. The commander then orders him to be scourged.

III. Conclusion - Paul's story is similar to Jonah who didn't want to preach to the Gentiles. He ran from the call of God and ended up in the belly of a whale. When we don't obey we will find ourselves in places God never intended for us. If he wouldn't have repented he would have missed one of the greatest Old Testament revivals in Ninevah. We need to obey God. God is better than we think so we need to change how we think. He wants to reach the unreachable, teach the unteachable, and transform the impossible.

A. Pray Closing Prayer

B. Call Up Prayer Team