

Acts: The Gospel Gone Viral
Lesson 45 “The Great Escape”

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. Most recently 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. After meeting with James when he came to Jerusalem, he was arrested and beaten in the temple before he was given the chance to minister.
2. Roman soldiers rescued and attempted to bring Paul to safety, however, Paul asked for the opportunity to speak and he then addressed the Jewish mob and shared his testimony. His testimony was powerful, but not well received so the commander declared he should be examined under scourging.

B. Today we are going to see how God moved supernaturally to release Paul from captivity in Jerusalem when the Jews were scheming to kill him and to get Paul back on track with His plan for his life. We are going to be taking about “The Great Escape.”

II. The Great Escape

A. **Acts 22:24-29 Escape From Scourging**

1. Paul used a tactic he learned in Philippi in *Acts 16*. He declared his Roman citizenship and this centurion and commander to not harm him and to hear his story.
2. Roman citizens were given special rights that were denied others. One of them was that a Roman could not be bound or beaten without a trial and condemnation.

B. **Acts 22:30-Acts 23:10 Paul Appears Before the Sanhedrin**

1. The Sanhedrin was an assembly of Jewish elders that was appointed to sit in tribunal and hear cases. This was the highest court amongst the Jews.
2. Ananias struck Paul contrary to the law. **Deuteronomy 25:1-2**. According to the law Paul would have had to be found guilty before he could be struck.
3. Paul rebuked the high priest strongly out of anger, but then repented when he found out who he was. We are called to honor leaders even when they sin. We don’t do the because they are honorable, but because we are people of honor.
4. Paul cleverly divided the Sanhedrin because he realized part were Sadducees and the rest were Pharisees. He got them arguing amongst themselves and then

the Pharisees declared they couldn't find evil in Paul (because they agreed with Paul on the resurrection of the dead.)

4. The commander then put Paul back in the barracks to protect him.

C. Acts 23:11-22 The Plot Against Paul

1. When Paul is put back in prison Jesus appears to him and tells him to not be discouraged, he had testified in Jerusalem, now he was going to testify in Rome also (the original plan).

a. Paul had just written Romans prior to coming to Jerusalem. In the letter he said he longed to come to the Romans (**Romans 1:9-11**). This longing was of God. Unfortunately, Paul override it and went with his personal desire to come to Jerusalem and got himself in a mess.

b. What's awesome is Jesus didn't rebuke Paul. Paul was down. He didn't need rebuked, he needed encouraged. This is how the Lord deals with us.

2. Over 40 Jews banded together and plotted to kill Paul. They plotted to set up an ambush by having the commander make Paul appear again before the council, and then killing Paul before he arrived.

3. Amazingly, Paul's nephew was in town and heard about the plot (this wasn't an accident. It was part of Jesus's promise in *verse 11*).

4. There was a lot of divine providence in the centurion taking Paul's nephew to the commander and the commander believing the young man's story. The commander then let the young man go and made preparations to rescue Paul.

D. Acts 23:23-35 Paul Sent to Caesarea

1. The commander ordered that a 470 person caravan be set up to take Paul to appear before Felix, who was the Roman governor of Judea in Caesarea (city northwest of Jerusalem). That's a heck of an entourage.

2. The commander, Claudius Lysias sent a letter along with Paul that explained why he was sending him.

3. Based on what he wrote Felix, Claudius could have let Paul go if he believed him to be innocent. It's possible he sent him to Felix for Paul's protection (not sure).

4. Most scholars believe the governor asked what province Paul was from to get out of hearing the case. When he heard Paul was from Cilicia, he realized it was in his jurisdiction and he would have to hear the case. He then agreed to hear Paul's case.

5. Unfortunately, Paul was in jail in Caesarea for two years. **Acts 24:27**. This demonstrates there was still a price to pay for Paul's disobedience. It also demonstrates the principle of seed, time, and harvest. Some breakthroughs are immediate and some take time.

III. Conclusion - As we have been saying, God can take our mistakes and rewrite them into our plan. The key to this and the key to deliverance is getting a word from Jesus. The word will supersede our circumstances.

A. Call Up Prayer Team

B. Pray Closing Prayer