

# Week 37

## The Power of A Testimony

### Paul Testifies as He Preaches

One of the most dramatic scenes in the book of Acts is Paul's speech before the angry crowds in Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 22:1-22. In this blog post, we will explore what Paul said, why he said it, and what we can learn from his example.

Paul was in Jerusalem to bring a gift from the Gentile churches to the poor Jewish believers. He also wanted to show that he was not against the law of Moses, as some falsely accused him. He joined a group of Jews who had taken a vow and went to the temple to complete the purification rites. However, some Jews from Asia recognized him and stirred up the crowd, claiming that he had brought Gentiles into the temple and defiled it. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, intending to kill him.

But God had other plans. The Roman commander of the fortress near the temple heard the uproar and came with soldiers to stop the riot. He arrested Paul and ordered him to be flogged and interrogated. But when Paul revealed that he was a Roman citizen, the commander changed his mind and decided to let him speak to the crowd.

Paul asked for permission to address the people in Aramaic, which surprised them and made them listen attentively. Aramaic was the common language of the Jewish people of that day. He began by telling them his background: he was a Jew, born in Tarsus, educated by Gamaliel, zealous for God, and a persecutor of the followers of Jesus. He then shared his conversion story: how he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, how he was blinded and healed by Ananias, how he received a commission from Jesus to be his witness to all people.

Paul's testimony was powerful because it showed how God had changed his life and given him a new purpose. He wanted the crowd to hear his story because he hoped that they would also recognize Jesus as the Messiah and repent of their sins. He also wanted to show them that he was not an apostate or a traitor, but a faithful servant of God who obeyed his calling.

However, Paul's speech did not have the effect he desired. When he mentioned that God had sent him to the Gentiles, the crowd erupted in fury and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!" They threw off their cloaks and tossed dust into the air, signaling their rejection of Paul and their readiness to stone him.

The Roman commander intervened again and took Paul into the fortress. He wanted to find out why the Jews hated him so much. He ordered Paul to be flogged and interrogated in hopes of learning all about Paul. However, Paul wisely claimed his Roman citizenship, which would prevent his being tortured and interrogated without a proper trial. The Commander ordered Paul to appear before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court, thinking he would learn more about him through their questioning.

There, Paul faced another hostile audience, composed of Sadducees and Pharisees, who disagreed on many doctrinal issues. Paul cleverly used this division to his advantage and declared that he was on trial because of his hope in the resurrection of the dead. This caused a dispute between the two parties, and some Pharisees even defended Paul, saying that he might have received a message from God or an angel.

Again, the commander feared that Paul would be torn apart by them, so he ordered his soldiers to take him back to the fortress. That night, Jesus appeared to Paul and encouraged him, saying, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

### **What can we learn from Paul's speech and his subsequent trials?**

Here are some lessons for us today:

- We should be ready to share our testimony with anyone who is willing to listen. Our testimony is our personal story of how we met Jesus and how he changed our lives. It is a powerful tool to communicate the gospel and to show God's grace and love.
- We should be respectful and courteous when we speak to others, especially those who have different beliefs or backgrounds. Paul addressed his audience as "Brothers and fathers" and spoke in their language. He also acknowledged their zeal for God and their devotion to the law. He did not insult or mock them but tried to find common ground with them.
- We should be bold and faithful when we speak for Jesus, even if we face opposition or persecution. Paul did not shy away from proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah and Lord, even though he knew it would anger some people. He also did not compromise or water down his message but spoke the truth in love.
- We should trust God's sovereignty and protection when we face difficulties or dangers. Paul knew that God was with him and had a plan for him. He did not despair or give up but relied on God's strength and guidance. He also saw every situation as an opportunity to witness for Jesus.
- We should have a global vision and a missionary heart when we serve God. Paul understood that God's salvation was for all people, Jews, and Gentiles alike. He obeyed God's call to go to the ends of the earth and preach the gospel. He also cared for the poor and the needy and supported the church with his prayers and gifts.

Paul's speech in Jerusalem was not his last. He would go on to speak before governors, kings, and even Caesar himself, but no matter who the audience was, he was faithful to share the whole gospel. May we follow his example and be faithful witnesses for Jesus in our world today.

#### **D. PAUL IN JERUSALEM (21:15-23:22)**

1. Welcomed by Brethren (21:15-26)
2. Arrested by the Jews (21:27-40)
3. Paul's Defense (22:1-21)
4. The Response of the People (22:22-29)
5. Paul Before the Sanhedrin (23:1-10)
6. The Plot Against Paul (23:11-22)

## Revive Us Again: How the Church Changed the World and Can Again

## Study Notes – Week 37

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