

Paul Testifies in Jerusalem

(Acts 21:37 – 22:30)

Introduction

In our last lesson, Paul had arrived in Jerusalem. He was warmly welcomed by the believers there. But they told him that some Jewish believers had been spreading lies about Paul. They accused him of teaching the Gentiles to turn their backs on the law of Moses. They also accused Paul of taking a Gentile into the Temple.

Trouble broke out. A huge riot started. The crowd grabbed Paul and began to beat him. The Roman army commander was called and he arrested Paul. The crowd went crazy and Paul's life was in danger.

We left off last time with Paul being carried up the stairs to the barracks by soldiers and people screaming, "Kill him! Kill him!"

Today, as we continue this exciting story of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, we learn that just as the Holy Spirit gave Paul courage and just the right words to say to people, He gives us courage in scary situations, too.

Opening Prayer

Father, as we get to know You and how Your Holy Spirit works in our lives, we begin to trust You more and more with everything in our lives. You give us courage as we face difficult situations and You give us the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can live our lives in ways that please You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8 ESV)

Lesson

The soldiers carried Paul safely to the top of the steps and were just about to take him into the barracks when Paul turned to the Roman army commander and asked to speak with him.

Acts 21:37-39

As Paul was about to be taken inside, he said to the commander, "May I have a word with you?" "Do you know Greek?" the commander asked, surprised. (38) "Aren't you the Egyptian who led a rebellion some time ago and took 4,000 members of the Assassins out into the desert?" (39) "No," Paul replied, "I am a Jew and a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia, which is an important city. Please, let me talk to these people."

Evidently the Roman army commander had no idea who Paul was and why there was all this commotion going on. So, Paul told the commander who he was and asked if he could speak to the crowd.

The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to have a clear mind in the middle of such chaos. And then the Holy Spirit gave Paul wisdom to know he had an opportunity to share the Good News with this angry crowd.

Acts 21:40

The commander agreed, so Paul stood on the stairs and motioned to the people to be quiet. Soon a deep silence enveloped the crowd, and he addressed them in their own language, Aramaic.

Ask: Have you ever shared with anyone about the wonderful things that God has done for you in your life? It can be scary, but the Holy Spirit can give you boldness to share your testimony in a difficult situation, too.

Let's read what Paul said to this angry crowd that wanted to kill him.

Acts 22:1-5

"Brothers and esteemed fathers," Paul said, "listen to me as I offer my defense." (2) When they heard him speaking in their own language, the silence was even greater. (5) Then Paul said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. As his student, I was carefully trained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. (4) And I persecuted the

followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison. (5) The high priest and the whole council of elders can testify that this is so. For I received letters from them to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, authorizing me to bring the followers of the Way from there to Jerusalem, in chains, to be punished.

[Gamaliel was a famous and well-respected Jewish rabbi and a leader in the Jewish Sanhedrin.]

Paul explains that he is a true Jew, trained in the Jewish laws and traditions. He tells them he understands their anger because he once persecuted anyone who taught that Jesus was the Messiah.

Then Paul tells them how he came to understand that Jesus was truly the promised Messiah they had been waiting for since the beginning of time.

Acts 22:6-8

“As I was on the road, approaching Damascus about noon, a very bright light from heaven suddenly shone down around me. (7) I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ (8) “Who are you, lord?’ I asked. “And the voice replied, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, the one you are persecuting.’

Then Paul told the crowd that God sent a man named Ananias to tell him what he must do now that he believed in Jesus.

Acts 22:14-16

“Then he told me, ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and hear him speak. (15) For you are to be his witness, telling everyone what you have seen and heard. (16) What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.’

After Paul became a believer, he went to Jerusalem because he wanted to share the Good News with other Jews. He thought surely, they would believe him when they saw the great change the Holy Spirit had made in his life. But Jesus told him that the people in Jerusalem wouldn't believe him.

Acts 22:17-18

“After I returned to Jerusalem, I was praying in the Temple and fell into a trance. (18) I saw a vision of Jesus saying to me, ‘Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won't accept your testimony about me.’

Paul wanted to share the gospel with the Jews but Jesus told Paul to leave Jerusalem because the Jewish people there would not believe him. The Lord knew that many Jews would reject Paul and the Good News about Jesus. That's why God sent Paul to share with the Gentiles.

Acts 22:21

*“But the Lord said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the **Gentiles!**’”*

The crowd listened attentively to Paul until he mentioned the *Gentiles*.

Acts 22:22

The crowd listened until Paul said that word. Then they all began to shout, “Away with such a fellow! He isn't fit to live!”

When the crowd turned angry again, the Roman Army commander stepped in.

Acts 22:23-24

They yelled, threw off their coats, and tossed handfuls of dust into the air. (24) The commander brought Paul inside and ordered him lashed with whips to make him confess his crime. He wanted to find out why the crowd had become so furious.

The Holy Spirit helped Paul be calm and patient. As he was led away to be whipped by the soldiers, he didn't fight or argue. Instead, he calmly spoke to the commander.

Acts 22:25

When they tied Paul down to lash him, Paul said to the officer standing there, “Is it legal for you to whip a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been tried?”

The soldiers stopped beating him.

Acts 22:26-27

When the officer heard this, he went to the commander and asked, “What are you doing? This man is a Roman citizen!” (27) So the commander went over and asked Paul, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” “Yes, I certainly am,” Paul replied.

When the Roman army commander learned that Paul was a Roman citizen, he stopped the soldiers from beating him and decided to let the Jewish religious leaders deal with Paul instead.

Acts 22:30

The next day the commander ordered the leading priests into session with the Jewish high council. He wanted to find out what the trouble was all about, so he released Paul to have him stand before them.

Next week we will pick up the story with Paul going before the Jewish religious leaders.

Today we have learned that the Holy Spirit gave Paul boldness and patience to speak calmly to this angry crowd about the truth of the gospel and the goodness of God.

We can trust the Holy Spirit to enable us to have wisdom and boldness to share our love for Jesus with others, too. We have the same Holy Spirit that Paul had!

God wants us to share with other people about His goodness. He wants us to tell people about all the wonderful things He has done for us in our lives.

Jesus commands us to go out and tell everyone everywhere about Him. He wants every person in the whole world to know that He came and died for their sins. If people would put their trust in what Jesus did for them on the cross, they, too, will receive eternal life and be able to live with Jesus forever in heaven.

Ask: Have you shared your faith with anyone? What was your experience?

The Holy Spirit is ready and able to help you be strong and courageous. He’ll give you just the right words to say.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, You want us to share the Good News with others so much that You are just waiting for us to ask You to give us the right words to say to people and the courage to say it. Thank You for being such a faithful God. We love You so much and want all of our friends and family to come to know You, too. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Pass the Chicken

Sit students in a circle. Ask a child a question and hand the chicken to the student sitting next to him to start passing it around the circle. The student must answer the question correctly before the chicken comes back around to him or her.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. Why did the Roman army commander order that Paul be arrested? (21:34. The Jews were trying to kill Paul and the Commander couldn’t find out why, so he ordered that Paul to be taken to the fortress.)

2. Why did the soldiers have to lift Paul to their shoulders? (Vs 21:35. The mob grew so violent the soldiers lifted him up to protect him from the angry crowd who wanted to kill him.)
3. When the soldiers carried Paul up the stairs towards the Barracks, what did Paul ask the Roman army commander? (Vs 21:37. Paul asked if he could speak to the crowd.)
4. Who did the Roman army commander think Paul was at first? (Vs 21:38. He thought Paul was the Egyptian who led a rebellion and took 4,000 members of the Assassins out into the desert.)
5. What did Paul share with the crowd? (Vs 22:2. Paul assured them that he was a true Jew, trained in the Jewish laws and traditions, but that he was now a follower of Jesus.)
6. Why did the crowd get angry when Paul spoke to them? (Vs 22:21 He said that God sent him to share the Good News with the Gentiles.)
7. Why did it make the crowd angry that Paul would share the gospel with the Gentiles? (The Jews thought the Gentiles were inferior, after all, weren't they God's '*Chosen People*'?)
8. Why did the Roman army commander stop the soldiers from whipping Paul? (Vs 22:27. Paul told the commander that he was a Roman citizen. And it was illegal to punish a Roman citizen before proving they committed a crime.)
9. What did the Roman army commander decide to do with Paul once he heard that Paul was a Roman citizen? (Vs 22:30. He ordered that Paul stand in front of the Jewish religious leaders.)
10. Why didn't Paul try to fight or argue with the soldiers, as they led him away to be whipped? (Vs 25. Paul was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit who enabled him to speak calmly to the commander.)

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