

Introduction

1. I mentioned last week that as a result of his arrest, Paul was given at least six high profile opportunities to witness
2. In our passage today we are going to look at the first of those six opportunities
3. Before we get into it, however, I want to share a few things I found to be quite interesting:
 - a. First, Paul's speeches in Acts can be categorized into what are generally referred to as his MISSIONARY speeches and his DEFENSE or APOLOGETIC speeches:
 - 1) His MISSIONARY speeches are primarily found in middle of Acts (13-21) which record Paul's three missionary journeys:
 - a) Before the synagogue in Acts 13
 - b) Before the citizens in Lystra in Acts 14 when they thought he and Barnabas were Zeus and Hermes
 - c) Mars Hill in Acts 17
 - 2) His DEFENSE speeches are those that we find primarily at the end of Acts after Paul's arrest and his trip to Rome (22-28):
 - a) His two speeches in Jerusalem—to the angry mob and then the Jewish Council
 - b) His speeches to Roman governors, Felix and Festus
 - c) His speech to King Agrippa
 - d) His speech to the Jewish leaders in Rome
 - 3) If we can differentiate between the two types of speeches, we might say that the ministry speeches focus on presenting the Gospel while the defense speeches focus on Paul defending his calling as a preacher of the Gospel
 - b. A second interesting fact is that Luke records twice as many verses from Paul's defensive speeches than he does his missionary speeches:
 - 1) Luke wrote almost the same number of verses covering Paul's missionary journeys (226) as he does Paul's arrest and travel to Rome (239)—it's almost a 50/50 split
 - 2) However, when it came to recording Paul's words from his speeches, Luke dedicates twice as many verses to his defense speeches (97) than he does his missionary speeches (47)
 - 3) One of the things this does for us is that it gives us a more intimate view of Paul's faith—in other words, while his missionary speeches reveal what Paul believed, his defense speeches reveal why he believed the Gospel and why he was so driven to preach it faithfully
 - c. A final thing I find interesting is that Paul's defense speeches aren't so much about defending himself from the accusations (there is some of that), but rather he uses his speeches to defend the Gospel and his role as a preacher of the Gospel—today's passage is an excellent example of this

A. Paul reveals his former misguided zealotry for God (22:1-5)

1. One of the accusations the mob made against Paul was that he had been preaching against the Jews, the Law and the Temple (READ 21:28a):
 - a. This was obviously untrue; listen to what Paul wrote in Romans 9:1-5 (READ):
 - 1) Paul loved his Jewish brothers and sisters, but he was also heart broken and grieved over their rejection of Jesus, their Messiah
 - 2) He loved the Law, but understood that it was a tutor to lead us to Christ not a means of salvation in and of itself
 - 3) He obviously respected the Temple and understood its importance because he offered sacrifices there (e.g. 21:22-26), but he also understood that as Christians our bodies are the temple of God
 - b. The mob's response is what we see so often from the world when Christians point out the truth about their beliefs or behavior; they reject the truth and resort to making false accusations about us:
 - 1) When we uphold the Bible's teaching on the sanctity of life and call abortion murder, they accuse us of wanting to destroy women's lives or deny them their right to control their own body
 - 2) When we declare what the Bible says about marriage and homosexuality, they label us bigots and homophobes with nothing but hatred for gay people
 - 3) Nothing has changed since Paul's day; what they did to him they do to us
2. The first thing Paul does in his speech is establish the fact that he once shared the same kind of misguided zealotry for God that his accusers did (READ 22:1-5):
 - a. He counters their argument that he preached against the Jews, the Law and the Temple by establishing that he was a Jew through-and-through:
 - 1) He was born Jewish in the city of Tarsus but raised in Jerusalem, the heart of Judaism
 - 2) He was educated and trained in strict accordance to the Law by one of the greatest and most well respected Jewish rabbis in Israel's history, Gamaliel
 - b. He continues by claiming that he matched—even exceeded—their zealotry for God:
 - 1) He persecuted Christians, killing some and putting others—men and women alike—in prison
 - 2) He chased them down even outside Jerusalem
 - 3) He even had the endorsement of the High Priest and the Council (the highest court in the land)
 - c. All of this should be understood as Paul's way of saying, "I was just like you!" (the key word is "was")
3. Takeaway: Identifying with those we are witnessing to can be a powerful tool:
 - a. We were certainly sinners just like them
 - b. Some of us might have been religious, while others indifferent toward religion
 - c. Maybe we shared some of the same struggles, likes or dislikes

Witnessing to the Catholic guy at the gym while in seminary—he respected me because of my Catholic upbringing and knowledge of Catholic doctrine

B. Paul describes his encounter with Jesus (22:6-11)

1. Paul describes three elements to his encounter with Jesus:
 - a. The first is confrontation over his sin (READ 6-7):
 - 1) Paul may have been zealous for God, but he was arrogant, proud, misinformed and misguided, which caused him to sin against the Lord by persecuting the Church
 - 2) So, the Lord confronted him on this very thing: **“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”**
 - b. The second element is Paul’s acknowledgement and acceptance of the resurrection of Jesus (READ 8-9):
 - 1) Obviously, this is important because belief in the resurrection of Jesus is essential for salvation
 - 2) But, it’s also important here because Paul’s encounter with the risen Jesus made him a witness to the resurrection—he didn’t just preach about the resurrection of Jesus and the dead; he was a witness to it first hand through his encounter with Jesus and this gave his message credibility (at least among some; see 23:6-9, esp. 9b)
 - c. The third element is Paul’s decision to obey Jesus (READ 10-11):
 - 1) You notice that the first words out of Paul’s mouth after Jesus spoke were, **“What shall I do, Lord?”**
 - 2) Paul’s words here weren’t mere lip service; he was genuinely committed to obey Jesus and we know this because immediately goes to Damascus just as the Lord commanded him
 - 3) However, we know it because of something else:
 - a) Look down at v. 16 (READ)
 - b) The Lord, through Ananias, commanded Paul to do two things:
 - The first was **“get up and be baptized”**—we know from the Scriptures that this is a call to become a disciple of Jesus and express it publicly through water baptism
 - The second was **“wash away your sins by calling on the name of Jesus”**
 - Luke recorded in Acts 9:18 that Paul didn’t hesitate and did this immediately
2. By describing his encounter with Jesus, Paul lays the foundation for what he is going to say next regarding the essence of his calling and the authority behind his mission (our next two points)
3. Takeaway: we cannot underestimate the importance of our own personal testimony and encounter with Jesus or why this motivates us to obey Him

C. Paul establishes the essence of his calling (READ 22:12-16)

1. An important concept in ancient Judaism and the early Church was the necessity of two or three witnesses to confirm something:
 - c) We see this mostly when addressing sin:
 - 1) When it came to violations of the Law, two or three witnesses were required to confirm violations, especially when it came to the death penalty (Deuteronomy 19:15; 17:6)

- 2) Jesus confirmed this practice when it comes to confronting unrepentant sin within the local church (Matthew 18:16)
 - 3) It also applies when confronting elders (1 Timothy 5:19)
- c. But, it was also important when determining the truth in other matters:
- 1) See 1 John 1:5-8
 - 2) We also have the two witnesses who will testify during the Great Tribulation (Revelation 11)
2. I highlight this because Ananias serves to some degree as a second witness to Paul's calling by Jesus (Paul was the first eyewitness; Ananias was the second):
- a. Ananias wasn't some random stranger: he was a well-known, well-respected man of God in Damascus who "**was devout by the standard of the Law**" (12)—if they were hesitant to take Paul's word for what happened, they could surely take that of a man like Ananias
 - b. Ananias himself could testify about Paul's calling:
 - 1) He could confirm Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, that he was blind, and that God used him to restore Paul's sight (12-13)
 - 2) He could confirm that God had appointed Paul to know His will, to see the "**Righteous One**", Jesus, and to hear a message from Him (14)
 - 3) He could also confirm that the Lord called Paul to "**be a witness for Him to all men of what [he had] seen and heard**" 15)
 - 4) The final thing Ananias could confirm was that Paul himself had
3. What Paul does here is establish before the mob the essence of his calling:
- a. God appointed him to witness to men everything he saw and heard about Jesus
 - b. He wasn't preaching against Jews, or the Law, or the Temple
 - c. He was testifying about Jesus and the Biblical truths related to Him
4. Takeaway: the essence of our calling as Christians is to testify about Jesus:
- a. Jesus left us here so we can make known to others what we have seen and heard about Him
 - b. It's easy to forget this
 - c. Sometimes we get caught up in the pleasures and pursuits of this life
 - d. Sometimes we get caught up thinking our main responsibility is to preach against all the ills of culture and society and fix what's broken in the world

D. Paul declares the authority behind his mission among and to the Gentiles (22:17-21)
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1. The second accusation the mob made against Paul had to do with his relationship with Gentiles:
 - a. They seemed to think Paul had abandoned his Jewish heritage, had personally forsaken the Law, and preferred living like a Gentile
 - b. They accused him of teaching Jews everywhere to do the same (21:21)
 - c. They had even accused him of defiling the holy Temple by taking Gentiles with him into the inner courts of the Temple (21:28-29)
 - d. None of this was based in fact, but rather was born out of jealousy and a general disdain for Gentiles
 - e. They believed it was unlawful for Paul to associate with Gentiles and they hated him for it; remember Peter's words to Cornelius' family? (READ Acts 10:27-28)

2. Much like Peter's association with Cornelius and his family was commanded and directed by God, so was Paul's mission among the Gentiles (READ 22:17-21):
 - a. If the mob had any complaint against Paul for his association with Gentiles, they needed to take it up with God
 - b. Twice in this passage Paul declares that it was the Lord specifically Who directed him to leave Jerusalem and go to the Gentiles
 - c. In fact, after the Lord told Paul the first time that the Jews in Jerusalem wouldn't accept his testimony about Jesus, Paul tried to convince the Lord otherwise by suggesting that his persecution of the Church would somehow give him credibility among the Jews
3. All of this establishes before the mob that Paul wasn't operating under his own authority, but under the authority of the Lord
4. Takeaway: the same is true for us; we exist and operate not under our own authority, but under the Highest Authority, the Lord Jesus Christ:
 - a. The world often claims that we have no right to declare Biblical truths to the world
 - b. In fact, lately many are claiming we don't even have the right to believe them for ourselves
 - c. But, the truth is—we don't need the world's permission to adhere to or even preach the Word of God or testify about Jesus
 - d. We have not only all the permission we need but the authority of the triune God