

The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 23

Spreading the Gospel by Testimony

Lesson Verse: 1 Peter 3:15,16

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."

I. Introduction

- A. Most people think that to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ requires a person to have had years of Bible College and Seminary training, and years of experience in public speaking!
1. But God says that all that is required is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which will result in us having a testimony of what God has done for each of us. This includes how God changed lives and attitudes, and feelings, where we had only tried and failed before.
 2. People need to see real people who have *experienced* what they are talking about. This kind of Gospel presentation is the most effective!
 - a. Advertisements use it. *"Let's see how Mrs. Jones reacts to Johnny's muddy pants now that she has tried new Gravel laundry detergent..."*
 - b. Politicians use it. *"Let me tell you what this country means to me..."*
- B. So far we have covered:
1. Chapter 13 "God's Call to Service"
 2. Chapter 14 "Suffering While Serving"
 3. Chapter 15 "Settling New Testament Salvation"
 4. Chapter 16 "The Second Missionary Journey"
 5. Chapter 17 "Searching the Scriptures"
 6. Chapter 18 "Spiritual Overdrive"
 7. Chapter 19 "The Securing of Ephesus"
 8. Chapter 20 "Saying Farewell"
 9. Chapter 21 "Saving the Best for Last"

II. Background

At this point in Acts, Paul is standing in front of a large crowd of very religious Jews that had just tried to kill him. Paul goes right to the most powerful means of persuasion - the testimonial. Paul was not going to waste time talking about theology, eschatology, and dispensationalism. Paul was going to present simply what God had done for him personally!

III. Lesson - "Spreading the Gospel by Testimony"

A. Paul's New Strategy - Divide and Conquer (22:30-23:10)

1. Paul meets his accusers face-to-face (22:30)
2. Paul presents the evidence of his life, not just words (23:1)
3. The high priest has Paul slapped (23:2)

Notice that people really don't care about the facts. They are only interested in their emotions. They didn't care enough about what Christ had to say. The religious muckety-mucks really have no "religion" when it comes right down to freedom of speech:

- a. It is all right for a person to sell Playboy, and Penthouse but, not all right for a preacher to stand on a street corner and proclaim the free Gospel of Jesus Christ!
 - b. It is ok to rally in Washington to ALLOW abortions, but, not ok to rally in Washington to STOP them!
 - c. It is great when someone points out all the flaws in fundamentalism, but watch-out when someone tries to point out the problems with the Catholic Church!!!!
4. Paul reviles back (23:3-5) - strikes back in word
 5. Paul then takes the opportunity to split his accusers into two factions - divide and conquer! (23:6-11)
 - a. The easiest way to defeat an enemy is to divide them! This is how the devil works in your life:
 - 1) Splits the authorities in your life
 - 2) Splits the relationships in your family
 - 3) Splits your convictions into gray areas
 - 4) Makes people fight each other instead of the real enemy (Isa 14:16)
 - b. Paul has side-tracked the courtroom and made "lemon-aid" out of the lemons that they gave him.

- 1) Sadducees - do not believe in the resurrection - therefore they are "sad you see." These represent the modern day Liberal who does not believe in any miracles.
- 2) Pharisees - believe in all the "fundamentals" especially the resurrection. These represent the modern day conservative Catholics. They are not saved, but this group do get saved (Acts 15:5), but they do have problems with Christianity!

c. Paul leaves the courtroom unscathed (23:10)

B. The Lord encourages Paul (23:11)

1. Yes Paul, you are going on to Rome, but it is going to be rough. Note that this encouragement comes just before the devil really lets loose (vs 12-15)

C. The Conspiracy Against Paul (23:12-22)

1. Some real God-fearing men take on a "vow" to kill Paul.
2. God protects his own, Amen! (23:16)
3. The Captain of the guard takes concern.

D. On to the Next Trial/Witnessing Opportunity (23:23-35)

IV. Conclusion - Review of the Principles

V. Study Questions