

## INSPIRED TESTIMONY (Acts 21-23:11)

As Paul turned resolutely for Jerusalem, Luke encouraged us to see him following in the footsteps of Jesus. Though men and women who loved him warned him of the danger and discouraged him from surrendering himself to the angry mob awaiting him there, Paul persisted.

Twice the Spirit prompted people to prophecy regarding the treatment he would receive in Jerusalem, but Paul held onto the calling he received and the conviction to faithfully carry the good news even in the face of considerable suffering.

Paul would testify.

As he entered Jerusalem, the brothers there encouraged him to demonstrate his respect for the law and the traditions of Israel by taking a ritual vow, but the crowd's contempt for Paul as a threat to the Jewish way of life would not be diminished. A false claim that Paul brought uncircumcised men into the Temple set the mob on edge.

Dragging Paul out of the Temple, they began beating him, but Roman soldiers intervened. Frustrated and annoyed by yet another Jewish uprising, the commander intended to punish Paul and get to the truth, but Paul's Roman citizenship changed the game.

As Paul cleared up the confusion regarding his identity with the Roman commander, he was given a chance to calm the crowd by speaking to the people. Paul raised his voice in Aramaic, the language of the Jewish people in 1st century Palestine, appealing to his fellow Jews and defending his record as a devout man of the faith, but just the mention of Gentiles sent the crowd over the edge again.

This angered the Roman commander, who had hoped Paul would help him restore order. Prepared to flog him, only Paul's Roman citizenship spared him the torture and interrogation. Instead, the next morning Paul was presented to the Sanhedrin, the 71 men charged with ruling the Jewish people, for questioning under guarded observation.

Yet again, Paul testified fearlessly, but the Sanhedrin would not have ears to hear him. Aware of the division that existed between Pharisees and Sadducees present, Paul redrew the battle lines and skillfully summoned the Pharisees to his defense. The council turned on itself and the commander was forced to extract Paul from the scene.

The following night, the Lord stood near Paul and encouraged him to keep testifying, not only in Jerusalem, but also as he made his way to Rome.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Television and cinematic courtroom dramas often paint the predictable picture of a witness, badgered and beset by anxiety, losing their cool and blowing it on the stand.

Not Paul.

What's so amazing to you about Paul's inspired testimony at the Temple or before the Sanhedrin?

How much do you think the prophecies shared with Paul on his way to Jerusalem prepared him to offer this kind of fearless testimony?

Have you ever found yourself flustered under the pressure to testify to the truth you know about the Lord?

Why do you think honest, transparent testimony is so hard for so many of us?

Why do you think it doesn't seem so difficult for Paul?

By this point after traveling throughout the Roman Empire, Paul knows his words won't always be well received, yet he persists in sharing the good news he knows of Jesus.

Why do you think Paul goes on like this instead of taking a path of less resistance?

Are you the kind of witness who is willing to testify even when the odds aren't great you'll be well received?

Learning from Paul's life and development, how can we become expert witnesses like Paul, full of confidence and competence for inspired testimony?

Pray for one another, that you might all grow as inspired witnesses.