

## INSPIRED BOLDNESS

As Luke wrapped up his account of all the Spirit was busy doing in the early church, he chose to finish by fixing our eyes on Paul as he stood trial and faithfully testified to the good news of Jesus.

After raising his voice in front of an angry mob and standing before the Sanhedrin, Paul discovered he had an unspecified trial date to appear before Caesar in his future. The Lord stood near him and delivered the message with an imperative: Be of good courage.

This admonition comes with a reminder that his faithful testimony can travel. At home or away, Paul can courageously perform the role Jesus has prepared him to play. He's not alone. He has good news to share and a story to tell. The Lord wants him to speak boldly.

It's immediately following this word of encouragement that Luke makes us aware of an assassination plot forty men planned to carry out against Paul, putting an end to his mission, silencing him for good. But, their efforts fail.

The Lord is sending Paul to Rome. His nephew overhears the conversation. Paul's Roman citizenship causes the Roman commander to be favorably disposed toward him. The meltdown at the Sanhedrin has him convinced Paul's opponents are mad enough to murder. As a result, Paul receives armed transport to rival that of the emperor himself. Under cover of darkness, the light of the gospel makes its way to Caesarea with a letter addressed to Governor Felix.

When the time for Paul's trial came, the Jewish elders employed Tertullus to help them make their case according to the Roman law, citing Paul's supposed incendiary behavior and intolerance for Roman gods. The irony!

But the governor could see their case was weak. Court adjourned. Paul waited patiently under guard, presumably writing letters to the churches he planted through the years. Felix hoped Paul might bribe him in exchange for his freedom, but Paul had no interest in his personal freedom; he was determined to testify in Rome.

A new governor, Festus, inherited the prisoner Paul and decided to hear the case again. The Jews, still intent on killing Paul in an ambush, and probably really hungry by now :) asked that he be transferred back to Jerusalem, but Paul appealed to Caesar, and Festus granted his request.

But before Festus could send him via boat to the emperor, he invited King Agrippa and an audience of prominent leaders to hear Paul's case. In their presence, Paul testified, sharing the story of his conversion and the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

He finished with these bold words: "I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today will become what I am, except for these chains."

Finally, Luke boarded a ship bound for Rome with Paul, but the journey proved difficult. Nearly shipwrecked and lost at sea, God protected Paul and the crew and delivered them safely to Rome. The journey was a microcosm of Paul's missional life with the Lord. Perilous, but powerful.

The lasting image Luke leaves with us is that of the missionary Paul awaiting trial, living under house arrest, and welcoming all who want to hear the good news of Jesus with all boldness, without hindrance.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As Luke presented us with our final look at Paul's life as a witness to world, he described Paul as a man of inspired boldness.

What jumped out at you regarding Paul's testimony in front of Festus and King Agrippa?

Did you notice Paul's next level language with Agrippa?

Why do you think Paul presses the case for Christ even further as a witness before the King?

Chained in their presence, Paul made it clear he wanted for all those listening the life he enjoyed in Christ, not a half-life or split-share, but fulness of it all.

What do you think this heart suggests about Paul?

What does it say about the Spirit within Paul?

Threatened by shipwreck, the gospel still made its way to Rome and we learn Paul welcomed anyone and everyone who wanted to hear the good news of Jesus. Along the way, Paul operated with an inspired boldness: contending for the lives of all aboard the ship, assuming leadership even as a man in custody, and blessing strangers on Malta with healing.

What would you say was the secret to Paul's boldness?

How can we live and love like this?

How can we welcome all who want to hear the good news of Jesus with all boldness, without hindrance ?

As a group, the time has come close this study on The Book of Acts and carry on in our time the good work Jesus began and the apostles continued. Now, it's our turn to live inspired.

Pray for God's help.