

The Great Stories of the Early Church
75-Paul to Jerusalem 02
Telling His Story
Acts 21:27-22:24

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,
28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.
29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)
30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.
31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.
32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.
33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.
34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.
35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.
36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.
37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?
38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?
39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.
40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

Acts 22

1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.
2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)
3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.
4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.
5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were

there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

Introduction:

I am sure that you remember where we are in the life and ministry of Paul. He is ending his Third Missionary and is in Jerusalem to give report to the elders as well as to share with them a very large offering that has been gathered from the Gentile churches that have been established. The larger portion of that gift was given, if you will remember, by the churches of Macedonia.

Paul had come to Jerusalem against the wishes and advice of many of his closest friends. In fact,

he was seemingly operating against the Will of God.

Acts 20:22-23

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

Acts 21:1-4

1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

Acts 21:8-14

8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

One can only wonder what interactions Paul was having with the Lord while all of this was going on.

While in Jerusalem, James convinced Paul that he should encourage the believing Jews there who were devoted to faithfulness to the Law and the Jewish worship by spending some times at the Temple with some men who were ending a Nazarite vow, which Paul was willing to do. The reason James had suggested this was that the Jews in Judea had been hearing reports of Paul's ministry among the Jews and Gentiles around the world and those who had been bringing the reports had been telling things that were not accurate.

The 30 or so years between Pentecost and the destruction of Jerusalem were difficult and

somewhat confusing times for believing Jews. James described them as being “zealous for the Law” which meant that they were living as faithful Jews, keeping all of the commands of God and worshiping according to the Holy Pattern given to Moses. They were offering the required sacrifices and keep the Holy Ways just as faithful Jews had always done.

The Law, the Temple, the Priesthood and the ability to worship at the Temple were all very important to them. At the same time, they were Christian who were worshiping outside the Temple in church gatherings. They were sponsoring the spread of the gospel to thge Gentiles and had agreed not to require them to convert to Judaism.

So, these people must, of necessity, have been somewhat conflicted. Here they were being studious and diligent about all things Jewish while the Gentiles, without all of that, were considered just as righteous as the Jews. How could this be?

Everyone knew what the church had decided, recorded by Luke in Acts 15, concerning the Gentile converts. They were not required to become Jewish proselytes. They need not be circumcised or bother themselves with Jewish Law, feasts, diet, dress, etc. The Jewish Christians had instructed them, however, not to eat things sacrificed to idols, things that had been killed by strangling, and not to participate in the idolatry of the pagans. But unbelieving Jews had been bringing the report, hoping to damage the reputation of Paul, that he had been telling Jewish converts to abandon their customs and the keeping of the Law. He, of course, had not done this, though he also did not tell those Jewish believers that they were **required** to keep the Law. He himself did not always conform himself to Jewish customs.

1 Cor 9:19-23

- 19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.
- 20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;
- 21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.
- 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.
- 23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

And, he especially despised the notion of confusing Gentile believers on the matter. This was the basis, if you remember, of his controversy with Peter at Antioch which had helped to spark the Council at Jerusalem.

Gal 2:11-14

- 11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.
- 12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

- 13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.
- 14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

So, the effort was to dispel this rumor and show to the sincere and believing Jews in the church at Jerusalem that the accusations were not true.

But here is the reality about accusers and liars. When one accusation is proven false, they merely conjure up a new one, and this is what they did here. There was a Greek traveling with Paul, a believer by the name of Trophimus, so the false accusers merely changed the story to say that Paul had brought Trophimus into the Temple and defiled it.

What has always been peculiar to me was the readiness of the Jews to become violently upset and ready to kill someone merely on the basis of an accusation. Now in one sense, this seems to be a human failing but it seems that it was more pronounced in the Middle East, among the Jews and those of Semitic bloodlines. We see the same thing in the Muslims of many places today, this tendency toward immediate and violent reactions to any perceived insult to their religion. Even as a child I was never really able to figure out why grown people who, at least in theory, were worshipers of the God in Heaven would be so violent and so easily offended and angry.

Nevertheless, the lie worked and immediately there was a violent mob ready to murder Paul without even so much as hearing his case. This was not only a violation of Jewish Law, “at the mouth of two or three witnesses let everything be established,” but also Roman Law. Yet, here they were ready to kill a man on the basis of a false allegation. No interest in hearing the matter and making sure they accusations were true. Honestly, I have often wondered if there were not people in Israel who sought to exploit the violent tendencies of the people to harm those whom they hated. Part of the crowd, indeed, would have been upset and angry but there was another part of the group that was cold, calculating and murderous in their intentions.

The commotion was so large that the Roman authorities noticed and came to see what it was all about and when they found them about to murder Paul they took him into custody. Of course, they had no idea who he was, it was merely against the law for a crowd to murder someone in the streets. And, surely we can see that this was the hand of God moving to protect Paul’s life and preserve him to minister until God had accomplished all His purposes through him.

Have you ever wondered how this actually works? How does God direct men to do what they naturally choose to do, but make it work out to His Purpose? I can imagine another scenario just as likely. I can imagine a scene in which the Roman soldiers who first saw the event simply stood and watched in amusement. What did it matter to them that these stupid Jews murdered one of their own? Why should they care? And I am sure that for the most part they did not have any concern. But as it worked out the soldier who first saw the event did care and care enough to report it and gather assistance to stop what was going on. This is how God works, causing men to care, causing them to decide to do something on their own but yet do exactly what He would have them do. There is a passage of scripture which comes to mind.

Rom 11:33-36

- 33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!
- 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?
- 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?
- 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

We should never be surprised to see an example of the reality that He works all things according to the counsel of His Own Will.

Can you imagine yourself in Paul's situation? He has been seized by a mob and almost murdered. The authorities have taken him into custody for protection. Personally, I would have been only too happy to be ushered into the castle away from the murderers, but Paul had other things on his mind, just at that moment. Let us return to our text.

- 35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.
- 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.
- 37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?
- 38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?
- 39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

He asked to speak to them and it is obvious from what he said that he had something in mind that he wanted to say. He was ready to give an account of himself to these who were racially his brethren though for the moment his enemies.

A couple of passages come readily to mind.

Matt 5:44-48

- 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
- 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
- 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?
- 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?
- 48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

1 Peter 3:14-17

- 14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;
- 15 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:
- 16 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.
- 17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

Paul was not angry with these who were his enemies. He rather loved them enough to desire that they know the truth concerning himself and why he was in Jerusalem. Most of all, he wanted them to know the truth concerning Christ and be converted.

Rom 10:1-3

- 1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.
- 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.
- 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

He loved them enough to desire their salvation, so he loved them enough to tell them the truth. He did not shade or color the story to induce them to receive it. He did not tell any funny stories to get them laughing with him, and he did not pull any punches about what his story meant. He simply told it, straightforwardly, knowing that there would be part of it that they did not like and would cause them to become violent. Why would he do such a thing? Because he hoped that there was maybe one in that crowd who would listen, become provoked, and ultimately come to Christ in repentance and faith. This was his sole hope.

Listen again to the story and notice when the crowd as a whole stopped listening.

Acts 22

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6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.
7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?
8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.
9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.
10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.
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12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,
13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.
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22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

They listened as he told of Jesus appearing to him, to his being baptized, to the vision of the Lord coming to him... all the way up to his story of being sent by God to the Gentiles. Here we see the problem, they were murderous racists who thought that no one but them should be granted Grace from God and they were willing to kill anyone who said differently.

I have said all of this and brought you to this point to encourage you to do just as Paul did so long ago.... Tell Your Story, tell it all, and tell the parts that you know will make unbelievers unhappy with you.

I have some suggestions:

1. Go back through your own memories of how you came to be where you are spiritually today.

2. Condense it into a format that you can share in 3 to 5 minutes.
3. Don't worry about every detail, but do include the important parts just as Paul did.
4. Write it down somewhere and look at it over several days making sure that it says what you would want someone you love to hear.
5. Commit it to memory and rehearse it to yourself on occasion. It would not hurt to rehearse it to God and ask Him to help you with your memory of what He has done in your life.
6. Use the memories to thank God often for what He has done for you.
7. Pray for opportunities and wisdom to share your story with others.

If you are sure that you will never have "one on one" time with an individual you would like to share the story with, compose a letter and humbly share it with them in that way.

If there is a part of you that objects and says, "Oh, they will be angry... they will not like me saying these things to them," remember Paul.

I guarantee you that when you stand before the Great Judgment of God you will not regret any time that you shared your story but I am quite sure we will all regret not having shared it.

Paul said, "my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Can you say the same about your own loved ones?

May God help us to encourage one another to tell our story.

You know, this is one of the things that the people of God historically have done. They took advantage of testimony times to tell the account of what God had done for them. They knew each other's account of how they came to faith. It distresses me that we do not all know that about each other.