

Don't Be Afraid To Speak Up - 12-20-23

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[0 : 00] Open your Bibles to Acts chapter 18. So Paul, he's on a second missionary journey, almost about to turn around and head back. He's up there in Corinth.

We left him in Athens. He had traveled quite a ways down from Thessalonica and Berea and down to Athens. He leaves Timothy and Silas behind him.

We're going to find out he specifically has told Timothy to go back to Thessalonica. But he leaves them. He gets to Athens, and he tells the guys who kind of brought him on his journey to Athens, he says, hey, go back and tell Silas and Timothy to get here as soon as they can.

So you're looking at by the time he gets there, they get home, back to Paul, I mean, back to Timothy and Silas, and get them back to Paul three weeks. You know, it's quite a while they've been able to minister there in the region of Macedonia.

So Paul's at Athens, and while he's there, he's moved because what does he see? He sees the whole place given over to idolatry. If you remember, Athens means uncertainty, and it was a city of uncertainty.

[1 : 06] They didn't know what God they were worshiping. And so they worshiped this unknown God, just in case they missed one. Paul, he doesn't get any, he doesn't have persecution there, but he's mostly rejected.

They kind of say to him, hey, we're going to talk to you about this another time. But there is no other time, because Paul then departs, and he gets out of there. For whatever reason, he seems to very quickly vacate there. But at the end of chapter 17, it says that there were certain of those that believed, among them Dionysus, an Areopagite, and a woman named Demarius, and others with them.

So a small church that started in Athens. Timothy and Silas are eventually going to come to Athens, because that's where Paul's told the guys that kind of brought him, go back and tell them to come. He must have left word that he went to Corinth. I mean, they didn't have cell phones, and they didn't have, they didn't send a carrier pigeon out, right? So it must have been like, you know, meet me at the Prancing Pony.

If I'm not there, look for a scruffy guy. But anyway, so they're eventually going to find him in Corinth. But he's moved on to Corinth now. Where are we in Paul's life?

[2 : 16] Paul was at his conversion. He's about 30-some years old. So if you take whatever date is there and subtract 5. So if it says AD 51, then he's about 46 years old at this time.

He's in his mid-40s at this point, early to mid-40s. This is also at the point, when he's in Corinth, he's going to write a letter back to the Thessalonians, back to Thessalonica at that point.

And then we'll get into his third missionary journey. So that's kind of where he is. So the message tonight, the title would be, Don't Be Afraid to Speak Up. And in our world today, we're told we need to speak up about a lot of things.

A lot of very hot topics that we should be speaking up about. But there's only one primary thing we really need to be speaking up about. And we'll see that tonight. So after these things, Paul departs from Athens.

He departs from uncertainty, and he comes to Corinth, which means satiated or full. So he's come from a place of uncertainty in this place that is just, and that's what Corinth was.

[3 : 19] It was very immoral. They were just every appetite of the flesh. They were satiated to the full. And this is where Paul now finds himself.

And he found in verse 2 a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome and came unto them.

In other words, Paul came unto them at this time. So Claudius, who is that? Claudius was the emperor at this time. He's a handsome guy. That's all I'm saying. Check him out. So, whoo, weak chin, floppy ears, cut that out.

Not that we're recording as well. So he was the emperor who came after Caligula. Caligula was his nephew.

Claudius was a shoestrapping relation back to Caesar Augustus, Octavius. And he remained alive because he was so sickly.

[4 : 20] His mother said of him that when he was born, that nature had started him but never finished. And she said he was a monstrosity and gave him to his grandmother to raise. So it's horrible.

The Roman families and ruling families, they're just terrible towards each other. So many of his relatives were killed off because you wanted to secure your position as Caesar.

But because of the fact he was so weak and sickly, he was left alive. In fact, his nephew Caligula made him kind of like co-ruler with him. But he was very cruel to him and would mock him.

But they eventually killed Caligula, the Praetorian guard. And they went and started killing all the family, the Praetorian guard.

They killed a bunch of senators. And then they eventually find Claudius hiding behind a curtain. And instead of killing him, they say, dude, you're the next emperor. And they bow before him and say, you are now Emperor Claudius.

[5 : 19] He actually turned out to be a really good emperor. He did, well, by American standards. Which is, it was a good economy, good infrastructure. He killed a lot of people. A lot of senators died during his rule to make sure that there was no coups and nobody tried to take over his throne.

He eventually has, I don't know how many wives, like three or four or whatever. But he marries Agrippina II. I don't know who Agrippina I was, but Agrippina II. And she was a conniver and eventually starts ruling through him.

The material point there is he adopts her son and makes him heir. And that renames him to Nero, Caesar Nero. What's the point of all that?

Well, this is the backdrop of what's going on. And as far as kicking the Jews out of Rome, nobody knows for sure why. Except that God needed Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth right now.

But the thought, there's a record where he forbade the Jews to gather at synagogues for whatever reason. And they refused to listen to that. And so he eventually just kicked them out of Rome. The Jews were kicked out of Rome a few different times throughout Rome's history.

[6 : 26] Very fitting because we're going to see that, guys. If the Lord tarries and if he doesn't change the current course of things with Israel, it would not surprise me one bit to turn on the news and you see that, oh, some city in wherever, other than a Muslim country, some city in Norway or somewhere in France or somewhere in the U.S.

that, well, you know what? We don't want to take sides. And we think it would just be healthier if all the Jews just left. You know, we don't want them in this college anymore. We don't want them in our neighborhoods anymore.

It's not that far-fetched at this point in time. But that's who Claudius is. An upstanding dude, no doubt. So Paul comes and does something a little different here.

Here, he comes to Corinth and instead of launching right into ministry, like you see he's been doing, going to the synagogue, he establishes a base first before he does that.

Paul's experienced in the last few places he's been something very different as well. The persecution's really ramped up. The first few places he went to with Barnabas, the first missionary journey, yeah, you know, they had some run-ins with people.

[7 : 37] But now with Silas, you know, he's been left for dead in Lystra. He's been imprisoned in Philippi. So it's really starting to ramp up at this point.

Priscilla and Aquila, or Aquila and Priscilla. At the beginning of the chapter, it's Aquila and Priscilla. By the time we get to the end, it's Priscilla and Aquila. And a lot of times she's mentioned first, before him. Seems to be that she's the more prominent one in the relationship as far as her role in ministry.

Right? When they bring in Apollos, they're going to bring in Apollos. We're not going to get to that point. And they're going to kind of show him a better way. She seems to be just as much in having a part in this as Aquila.

And I think back to Deborah. Deborah was a prophetess, a judge in Israel. And she was married. And yet God had chosen to work through her.

We see them show up a few other places in Scripture. When Paul is writing to the Romans, they are back in Rome at that point. And he says, greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus.

[8 : 39] And there you see her name mentioned first. When he writes the letter to the Corinthians, he will write that eventually when he's in Ephesus. He'll write it back to the Corinthian church because there's, I think, four letters to the Corinthians.

But we only have two. He receives a letter from them, news from them of all these problems. So he writes back. And then he says, the churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord with the church that is in their house.

So they're eventually going to start a church in Ephesus. And then in 2 Timothy 4.19, Paul is at that time writing to Ephesus. He says, salute Prissa. It would be Priscilla. Priscilla was a more, kind of like a more familiar way of speaking to her.

Prissa was her, would be her official name or whatever. Her given name. Salute Prissa and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus.

And so they come in quite a bit. But anyway, in verse 3 it says, and because he was of the same craft, he abode with them and wrought. For by their occupation they were tent makers. And so Paul comes in and meets this Jewish couple.

[9 : 40] We don't see where he's actually necessarily preached the gospel to them. But you know it's Paul, so they're talking. And they seem to be quite open. But either way, he goes into business with them. This is Paul who will write in 2 Thessalonians when he writes the second letter to Thessalonica.

In chapter 3, verses 7 through 9, he says, For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us. For we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you. Neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing. But we wrought and labor and travail night and day. We worked that we might be chargeable, not be chargeable to any of you. Not because we have no power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us.

So Paul will write this letter back to Thessalonica and say, hey, remember when we were there? We worked for the things we had. But then he will also write to Timothy in 1 Timothy and say in chapter 5, he said, Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.

For the scripture says, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn, and the laborer is worthy of his reward. And so where he's saying, hey, we didn't take anything.

[10 : 50] We worked. But he also says that Timothy is perfectly fine if through the ministry the ox is being supported. But Aquila and Priscilla, their home seems to be open to the Lord because wherever they go, they're going to go to Ephesus and they're going to have a church there.

They're going to be in Rome and they're going to have a church there. And they have Paul with them. They just open their home with this hospitality. And so Paul chooses first to establish himself before he begins his ministry.

This is a little different. And it's kind of going to be his mode going forward. He's going to go to Ephesus and he's going to be two and a half years in Ephesus. And it's kind of going to start to change a little bit as his ministry changes some.

In the past, he's kind of gone into places, planted a church, established some people, and he was gone. Or he's left Timothy and Silas like now. But Paul is settling a little bit.

He's getting older too and beat up a lot. And so in verse 4, and he reasoned, and that word reasoned is like we said before, to mingle thought with thought or layering thought upon thought upon thought.

[11 : 51] He reasoned, he mingled thought, he layered thought in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And so now once he's established his base, it's back to business as usual.

Right back into the synagogue every Sabbath. So we have a kind of an idea of time passing here. It's more than one Sabbath, probably more than two as he's continuing here in Corinth. So you can see the time frame that is taking Silas and Timothy to get here to Paul.

And he is reasoning with them. He's speaking with them. He's showing them scripture. And they're going through the scripture. We're going to find out when Paul, when Timothy and Silas come in

verse 5, it says that then Paul testifies that Jesus was Christ.

Or is the Christ, is the Messiah. So is he not until this point? Has he been leading up to that point? Has he been kind of building this rapport with them? And then in verse 4, there where it says, and he persuaded the Jews.

That word persuaded shows up twice in this chapter. It's going to show up later that the Jews are going to say, this fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law. Well, look what that word means at that time.

[12:59] This word here, persuade, means to cause by words to believe. And so that's what he's doing. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word. In verse 5, and when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, they're like, Paul, we looked for you in Athens.

You weren't there. I mean, come on. We went to the inn. It's a good thing you left a note. It took a while. Timothy had some stomach problems. Oh, yeah, yeah. Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

Pressed means to be held, to be constrained. He was gripped by the Holy Spirit. That like, Paul, now is the time. Now is the time, Paul. Acts 17, 14 through 15, looking back briefly, that's when Paul said to the guys who brought him to Athens, he said, hey, get Timothy and Silas back from Macedonia.

Send them to me. And then we see that same thing when Paul writes to the Thessalonians in chapter 3, verses 1 and 2. He says, wherefore, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left to Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, is to establish you and to comfort you concerning your faith.

So when Paul leaves them in Macedonia, it's not just at the last location they were, which was, what, Berea, right? Yeah, it's from Berea. But he sends him, he says, Timothy, go back to Thessalonica.

[14:27] Go back there to establish them. That we sent him to establish you. And then verse 6, Now when Timothy was come from you unto us and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that you have good remembrance of us as always, desiring greatly to see us as we also to see you.

So Timothy, when he gets there, he tells Paul this. I think Paul is just so excited to see his boys again, that Timothy and Silas are there. He's hearing the good news of the church growing, that he's like, I'm gonna go preach Jesus.

See what happens. But I think the lesson we have here is, what did Timothy and Silas do? They just showed up. They just showed up, right? Never discount the effect that you have upon the body by just showing up.

That the Holy Spirit gripped Paul, and Paul goes in and he preaches Christ. Timothy and Silas didn't. They just showed up. And that was the effect that God wrought through them.

1 Corinthians 12, 12, For as the body is one and as many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body. So also is Christ.

[15:31] One body. So Paul goes in and he testifies that Jesus is anointed. Jesus is Messiah. Jesus is Christ. In verse 6, And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment and said unto them, Your blood be upon your heads.

I am clean. From henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. So Paul, who has been gripped, goes in and preaches Christ, and he is now opposed. Opposed means just to stand against.

That they steadfastly stand against Paul. Blasphemed means to make common that which is to be revered. It's to take something holy and to bring it down to that which is common.

Now, not in the sense like where Jesus laid aside his glory and took upon him the form of a man and became common in a sense, but it's to take something and make it essentially of no value anymore.

So you see that unfortunately today. Where Jesus the man, oh, we'll take him. But Jesus the God, we're not too into that anymore. Jesus is a good role model.

[16:38] Jesus is a good example. Jesus makes for good stories. But Jesus as our God that we are responsible to, that is holy, that is reverent, that is above us, whose name is not to be taken lightly, holy, that's not really in vogue anymore.

I was watching a video on, I have a study in Luke I have to do. So I was watching this like synopsis on it. And it was good. It was really good. The guy's going through it.

It was only a few minutes long. But then I realized as he's going through it, I thought he is telling everything that Jesus was about from the earth perspective. You know, about Jesus came to teach us this and to be an example of this.

And he did good and he healed the sick and he spoke to the poor. But nothing about, oh, my sin and my spirit that needs to be alive and the comfort that's found in the Holy Spirit.

It was so devoid of that. It was really good. And then I realized, hmm, that part was missing. Had a good outline. So they opposed themselves. That means to stand against and blaspheme.

[17:40] They opposed themselves. That's not a good thing to do, guys. You shouldn't oppose yourself. That's like where the scripture talks about being self-deceived. It's a bad place to find yourself. So opposition to oneself.

What is it? What does it look like? Well, we're going to go through, as we go through the rest of this little section here, we're going to see what that looks like. But a lead up to it. Opposition to oneself is to oppose the truth.

We're going to see that they do that. They say Jesus is the Christ. And they say, no, we don't believe that. It's to oppose God's people. So they stand against the people of God. The Jews say, we're God's people.

Well, yeah, but not the believing people of God. Which ultimately leads to opposing God. They oppose peace. They're going to totally stir up this whole city. They oppose law.

Where they say they want to keep the law. To do so, they have to violate the law. And they oppose life. They're ready to put someone to death. Because they have opposed themselves.

[18:39] Verse 7. And he departed thence and entered into a certain man's house named Justice. One that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. So Paul says, I'm done with you Jews.

I'm going to the Gentiles. And he went next door. Literally, it says, that wording there where it says, whose house joined hard to the synagogue meant their walls joined each other.

So he's like, I'm out of here. I'm done with you. I don't even want to be near you. Hey, can I come on in? Goes right next door to this guy's house. It's awesome. You know, Paul, in Acts 9.15, the Lord says to Paul, go your way.

I'm sorry. He's saying to Ananias, who's being told to go pray for Paul. He says to Ananias, go your way. For he, Paul, is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

At the end of Paul's life, Paul is going to reiterate that. Acts 28.28. Be it known, therefore, unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and that they will hear it.

[19:42] This is when the Jews, his last time he speaks to them, they reject him. And he says, God has sent salvation to the Gentiles and they will hear it. And that's true. The Gentiles have heard it. While Paul turned his focus to the Gentiles, he did not turn his back to the Jews.

So, yes, he has shifted his focus. You're going to see that. He's not going to give up on the Jews. He's still going to go to the synagogue, but we're going to see now when he gets to Ephesus, he's going to spend two and a half years at the school of Tyrannus teaching the Gentiles.

We're going to see him spending a year and a half in Corinth, not talking to the Jews, but teaching the Gentiles. But while he turned his focus to the Gentiles, he did not turn his back on the Jews.

And we don't either.

We don't turn our backs on the Jews. They are our brothers and sisters. In Christ? No. But they are our brothers and sisters by adoption as we have been grafted into that vine. We are the adopted ones.

They are the illegitimate. We have been brought in because of Christ. In a sense, they're like the prodigal, and God will bring them back. There will be a day where they will say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

[20:47] Paul says in Romans 1.16, he says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God and salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek or to the Gentile.

And so Paul departs. He goes into this guy's house. He goes into Justice's house. This guy, Justice, that name comes up in Colossians. I don't know for sure if it's the same guy.

But in Colossians 4, Paul says, Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, salute you. And Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, touching whom you received commandments. If he come unto you, receive him.

That's John Mark, who he said, get out of here. I don't want you in my ministry. Now he's giving the Colossians instruction to receive him. And Jesus, which is called Justice, who are of the circumcision.

These only are my fellow workers under the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me. Is it the same guy? I don't know. But he lived right next to the synagogue, probably a Jew. And here he says that he's of the Jews and a fellow worker.

[21 : 49] And Crispus, verse 8, the chief ruler of the synagogue believed on the Lord with all his house. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. So Paul leaves the synagogue.

But the chief ruler of the synagogue, the guy who's running the show, along with many others, they said, we believe you, Paul. We're coming with you. It was a good old-fashioned church split. But Crispus, he comes in 1 Corinthians 1, verses 12 and 14.

Paul says, now this I say, that every one of you says, I'm of Paul, and I'm of Apollos, and I'm of Cephas, and I'm of Christ, and I'm of Chuck Smith, and I'm of, you know. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius. And so in verse 8, where it says that many believed and were baptized, well, Paul baptized only a couple of them.

What does that mean? If many were baptized, he only baptized a couple. We had Timothy and Silas there as well. But also, what do you see about Paul in his ministry? He brings people along quickly. He's like, this is not like a 20-year program, guys, of growth.

[22 : 55] You have the same spirit. You have the same opportunity to respond in faith to the Lord. And what else do we see? In the book of Acts, a person's faith never affects just them, does it?

That they believed on the Lord with all of his house this Crispus. Their faith never just is personal, never stays inside the walls of their own little personal space.

It always affects other people. And then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision and said, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not your peace.

Afraid? What's going on here? Paul, he just baptized like a ton of people. They all came to Christ. The whole synagogue has just been emptied. What do you mean afraid? Well, why was Paul afraid? Because Paul knew what to expect next.

He knew what to expect. It was time for persecution. When the synagogue, when the Jews kicked him out, when they turned against him, he knows what's coming now. Persecution. Remember what we said, where Ananias was given the command to lay hands on him because Paul was sent to the Gentiles.

[24 : 03] Well, we're also told in Acts 9.15, But the Lord said unto him, Go your way, Ananias, for he's a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. We looked at that.

Verse 16. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. So Paul says, yeah, I am sent to suffer. Paul knew what was coming next.

In 1 Corinthians, he's going to write back to the Corinthians, right? He's going to talk about when he was there. 1 Corinthians 2, verse 3. Paul says, I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.

So this is who Paul was to the Corinthian church. And the Lord then comes and speaks to Paul. He speaks to him in the night. It's a vision of the night, specifically says that.

Was he awake? Was he asleep? I don't know, but Paul knew it was of the Lord. He knew it was the Lord. And I thought it was interesting. Psalm 62, verse 1 says, Truly my soul waits upon God. From him comes my salvation.

[25 : 04] The idea of waits there is waits silently, waits quietly. And the best place to hear God's voice is in the quiet, with a quiet heart.

You think of when Elijah was on the mountain, running from the prophets of Baal. Well, running from Jezebel after slaying the prophets of Baal. And then there's the fire and the whirlwind. And he goes on out.

He hears a still small voice, wraps himself in his mantle, and goes and stands in the entrance of the cave. And the Lord speaks to him at that point. But it's in the quiet. When he's alone, when he is quieted, then the Lord speaks.

So Paul says to the Corinthians, I was afraid. I was under great fear when I was with you. And the Lord spoke and said, Don't be afraid. Hold not your peace.

For I am with you, and no man shall set on you to hurt you. For I have much people in the city. That literally means no man shall grab you. No man shall place hands on you, Paul. Proverbs 29, 25 says, The fear of man brings a snare.

[26 : 02] But whoso puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe. Proverbs 3, 25 and 26 says, Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation or the wicked when it comes.

For the Lord shall be your confidence and shall keep your foot from being taken. Do not be afraid when fear encompasses you. It's interesting here, too, because what does God say to Paul?

He says that I have much people in the city. He's like, Paul, I need you to speak. Like, Paul, your fear has the potential to hold back the faith of the entire city. Just as we've seen that your presence will affect the body in ways you have no idea, just by being there.

Well, the fear that we carry, which is directly opposed to faith, had the potential to hold back the entire city here. And so the Lord says to Paul, Don't be afraid.

I'm with you. No man shall hurt you. I have much people in this city. So what was the cure for fear?

The cure for fear is God's presence. I'm with you. And God's promise is God's word. God has spoken his word to Paul.

[27 : 03] Paul has believed the word, which is Paul. I'm with you. You have my promise. No one's going to hurt you. The cure for fear, God's presence and God's promise. Verse 11. He continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

So Paul says, OK, if no one's going to touch me, I'm going to keep going. If nobody's going to lay a hand on me, then I have no fear to preach the gospel. You know, we have the same promise that God said, I am with you and no man will lay a hand on you unless the Lord allows it.

We can preach the gospel. We can tell the truth in all boldness. If we get fired, if we get beat up, if we get yelled at, whatever, then that's the Lord. Because we have the same promise that nobody's going to lay a hand on us except the Lord allow that.

So where Paul continued there, that literally means to sit down. That Paul sat down there a year and a half. Paul was settled there. Second Corinthians 11.9, Paul says, in writing to the Corinthians, he says, And when I was present with you, speaking of this time we're reading about, I was chargeable to no man.

For that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied. And in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. So Paul writes back to them.

[28 : 20] He says, that year and a half I was there, I was not a burden to you. I was not a burden to you because of my fear. I was not a burden to you because of my extravagant lifestyle. You know how I lived among you.

And so at this time, Paul would have written then the book of 1 Thessalonians, during this year and a half in Corinth. Written back to Thessalonica because he heard what? They think the day of the Lord's already come.

They think the rapture happened. They think that they missed it and that those who have died in Christ, oh, they missed the rapture or whatever. That they're in the tribulation. So he writes this, no, that's not true, guys.

You know, you have no need that I write unto you concerning the times and seasons. Actually, I think that's from 2 Thessalonians, but anyway. But when he writes to 1 Thessalonians, in verse 1, he says this, So that now gives you a kind of a time and a place to match with that.

When you read Thessalonians, you can know, oh, this is when Paul was in Corinth. When Timothy and Silas came and Paul was afraid and God spoke to him. And then he wrote this. That's great. So when fear is removed, what happens?

[29 : 29] Well, there's a settling. When God removes fear through his promise and through his presence, there's a settling. Paul sat down. He sat there.

He stayed there for a year and a half. There's understanding of God's word. He taught during that time. There's fellowship. He continued with the believers. And there's longevity. There is opportunity to do God's work in a space of time.

So Paul's here for a year and a half and things are going great. I mean, this is like kind of like a vacation for Paul. The Jews have not attacked him. He's teaching for a year and a half.

And it seems like, though, the Jews are biding their time. Those are the synagogue. Those that are opposed to him. Because in verse 12, it says, And when Galileo was the deputy or the proconsul, remember we talked about them before?

That the proconsul would be over a region of Rome that was not militarily controlled. They had no control over the military.

[30 : 27] Caesar kept that to himself. The emperor kept that to himself. So if it's a proconsul, it means an area that is well-established and peaceful. And these are the areas that Paul is using the culture he's in, using the infrastructure so that he can go and preach the gospel.

So the proconsul of Achaia, during that time, this guy Galileo becomes a deputy, usually one year. Proconsuls were only like for one year. The Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat.

So for whatever reason, they think now's our time to act. There's a new guy in office. Let's go. Galileo's name means one who lives on milk. I think he had a pretty easy growing up years. But the interesting thing was, his father was, have you heard of this, Seneca, the Greek philosopher or whatever?

Seneca, the elder, was his father. Seneca, the younger, was his brother. And Seneca, the younger, writes about him and says that he was a pretty upstanding guy, that he couldn't be bribed, that he was very eloquent.

[31 : 34] So the Jews, obviously, they'll think that this is their time. They're going to do something here. And they stir everybody up. Proverbs, it says in Proverbs 1, verse 10, So that's some of what we said about when you oppose yourself, you oppose the truth, God's people, God, peace, law, and life.

And so their feet are quick to shed innocent blood. What has Paul done to them except tell them the truth? In verse 13, the Jews then come.

They come before Galileo with their complaint. I don't think, yeah, they brought him to the judgment seat. So they bring Paul with them. They've grabbed Paul. It's interesting that Paul just, he's so surrendered to the Lord in that when people grab him, he just goes.

I'd be like, I'm running, you know? Well, if you're going to get me. But Paul's just like, oh, here we go again. Okay. So they take him saying, This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.

So we look at that word persuade before, to cause by words to believe. This word persuade means to solicit, to incite. So soliciting someone to incite them purposely for the reason of creating an insurrection.

[33 : 10] They're soliciting them. This is how they've got to bring in people to their movement. They've got to go out and solicit. They've got to convince them to come in. Where Paul just gives them the truth.

By words, convinces them to believe. And see the difference? When you believe something, you own it. It's yours. So someone speaks something to you and they convince you to believe. That's yours. It's almost like it's transferred to you.

You don't need that person anymore because you now believe it. But if you have to be solicited, you have to be like brought in to solicit, right? It's to convince someone with means other than their own reason, right?

I'm having to use some other means to get you to come. Here, here's a good reason. Not like reason like, I just said not their reason. I said good reason. But I mean like, here's something. Something you're going to gain from this other than that it's your own internal belief. Man, our culture is full of that. People are solicited constantly to insurrection. They don't know why they're doing it.

[34 : 09] They've just been told, come and throw in your lot with us. We shall go and shed innocent blood. Hey, this is a good cause. This is going to be good for you. It's going to increase your chance to get a job. It's going to increase your social credit score.

It's going to make you look good on social media. They're going to come and solicit you. But in the church, we should have signs that say no soliciting. That doesn't mean people come and solicit us. That people should know we are not soliciting them.

That is not our goal, to solicit. Anyway, Paul tells us in Timothy, because the people have just said it contrary to the law. Well, Paul tells us the law is a good thing. He says in 1 Timothy chapter 1 that

the law is good if it's used lawfully.

Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient. Interesting. They are upset because they're saying Paul's not following the law. Paul's essentially saying, if you are going to stay in the law, you are acknowledging that you are lawless and disobedient.

You don't need that anymore. Because once in Christ, we don't need a law to govern us because we are no longer lawless and disobedient. We have a new nature. That new nature is now what rules. So they stood against themselves.

[35 : 14] Remember that? They stood opposed to themselves. Reason, unopposed, will turn any man from law to grace. It is reasonable to turn from the law to grace unless you stand against yourself.

Right? That when the gospel of the truth is presented to you, it is very reasonable to turn from the law and to turn to grace unless you reject it. It is only when we are opposed, when we are opposing ourselves, that we block that channel of grace.

And then in verse 14, when Paul was now about to open his mouth. So Paul says, okay, I know what I'm supposed to do. I'm not supposed to plan ahead of time what to speak, but at that time, the Holy Spirit will give you the words that you need to say.

I know that I'm called to be a witness before the Jews and Gentiles and kings. All right? This is what I'm supposed to do. So when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Galileo said to the Jews, if it were a matter of wrong.

Well, wait. See, he was raised on milk. So he's probably like, if it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, oh, you Jews. Reason would that I should bear with you. So he says, Paul is expecting to have to defend himself.

[36 : 26] And then from this whole other source, someone else is defending him. Makes me think of how when we've been going through Genesis on Sunday morning with Abraham, where he's about to stretch forth his hand to take the knife and kill Isaac. And he knows what he needs to do.

And then something stops him. Paul here is about to open his mouth. And then he looks over and Galileo is here defending him. And what does he say? He says, if it was a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness.

Wicked lewdness literally means evil villain. If it was a matter of wrong or if you had an actual evil villain. Then, okay, reason was that I should bear with you. If only our civil government would operate with such reason.

It would be wonderful. But what was Paul experiencing here? Paul experienced God's promise fulfilled. God had said, I am with you. No man shall lay hand on you to hurt you.

And Paul is now experiencing the fulfillment of that. For a year and a half, he's lived at Corinth. And no one's laid hand on him. And yet, look, God's promise has layer upon layer of fulfillment, doesn't it? And Paul thought, thank you, Lord.

[37 : 26] I've been able to teach for a year and a half. I've been with the brethren. This has been great. And then he gets dragged before Galileo. He's like, okay. Couldn't last forever, couldn't it? And then the Lord continues to just unfold promise after promise.

And Paul experiences that. Where Galileo says, the reason would be that I should bear with you. That literally means to take your side. He said, I'm not going to take your side. You're trying to get me to take sides.

I'm not taking sides in this. And he says in verse 15, if it's a question of words and names and of your law, look you to it. For I'll be no judge of such matters. Religion seeks to advance its cause by political means.

Because it has no other way to do that. It has to solicit people to bring it in. It's going to use political means to try and bring people in. That's the only way it knows how to do that. And so here, this guy is actually pushing back on that and saying, no, no, no.

I'm not going to get involved in all that. That's a good thing. Okay. It is not for the civil government to tell the church how to operate. That's just how it is. That's a fact.

[38 : 30] There is a purpose for civil government. At this point, it looks like Galileo is an upstanding dude. Man, this is great. He's got Paul's back. He seems to be tracking with righteousness.

And then in verse 16, and he draved them from the judgment seat. He's like, get out of here. Then all the Greeks took Sothisnese, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment

seat.

And Galileo cared for nothing. And Galileo cared for none of these things. So we knew that Crispus, in verse 8, was the chief ruler of the synagogue. He believes in Jesus, goes with Paul. They oust him.

And now you have this guy, Sothisnese. Sothisnese's name means savior of his nation. So they brought him in. They thought, yes, this is the one that's going to save Judaism here and get rid of these Christians.

They make him the ruler of the synagogue. Galileo comes in. They got this plan. They're going to bring Paul before the judgment seat. And the whole thing falls apart. And now he's getting whooped on. But Galileo, who just seemed to be a man of character and law and justice, stands by and cares nothing for these things.

[39 : 43] He doesn't care if the Jews get beat. He doesn't care if they get beat up. Civil government. Not willing to determine how God's people worship. A good thing.

Not willing to protect God's people. A bad thing. A very bad thing. We live in a world today where you can have someone who will stand up for justice, for truth, for honor.

Unless it's a Jew. Oh well. It's just a Jew. We also live in a world where we've totally flipped it and the victim is the guilty party.

If someone's done something wrong to you, what did you do to bring that on yourself? If somebody's whooped on you, what did you do that they would feel like they need to do that? You must be at fault for someone to do that to you.

Because everybody's basically good. So you must have done something to incite that evil in them, for them to act that way upon you. And it's not the perpetrator who's just, you know, shot your dog and stole your chickens and ate all your bacon.

[40 : 48] Right? He's not the bad guy. You must have done something that he came into your space and did that. It's insane, this world we live in. You see it in the church.

You see disagreements between people. You see one party harming another. And there's no repentance. Because, like, well, but what did you do to bring that on?

You know, I know that person. They're a good person. No, they're not. They're a filthy, rotten, stinky sinner. Saved by grace. And they have just as much potential for the flesh to operate in their lives as I have it to operate in mine.

Without repentance, there's no what? Fellowship. No fellowship without repentance. You can have relationship without repentance. But you cannot have fellowship. Because relationship can be one way.

I can forgive. I can forgive. And I can love. But if there's no repentance from the other party, there can't be fellowship. Because they've essentially walled themselves off to fellowship.

[41 : 44] It's kind of like if you have a cup. I wasn't planning on going this direction. If you have a cup of water and you fill it with dirt. Right? Right? And now your cup, which was, you know, 16 ounces is eight ounces of dirt.

Well, you can still drink out of that cup and get water in it. But the capacity that it once had isn't there any longer until you get the dirt out. Right? If you don't get the dirt out, you can still use that cup.

But its capacity is reduced. And so the more and more junk you put into that cup, the less repentance there is, the less cleaning out of it, the less and less capacity there is. That's what relationships are.

You can have a relationship that's harmed, that there has been wronged on. But without repentance, you've kind of lost the capacity. So yes, we're to forgive those.

Seven times seven. Seventy times seven. Who wrong us. And who come against us. And to love them. But our capacity for relationship may be greatly diminished. And it's not your fault, necessarily.

[42 : 45] Right? You don't have to blame yourself as the victim. Say, well, can I do more? Well, there might not be anything you can do more. You have to leave it to the Lord. It's like in marriage counseling. Marriage counseling can only go so far.

And it always stops at the door of willingness. Right? If you have one party's willing, the other one's not, we're done. There's nothing to do. Nothing more that can be done. If there's willingness, you're good.

Because the next step is, what does the Bible say? Are you willing to work together? Are you willing to forgive and love one another? Yes. Are you willing to do what the Bible says? Yes. Okay. Then we can move forward. But without willingness, there's no real relationship.

Anyway, so here is Paul here. That's the civil government. They're not willing to protect God's people. It's a bad thing. And so he then said, he drives them away and cares nothing for them. The man who just said, well, what reason would I, or there would be a reason for me, oh, you Jews, that I should bear with you. The man who is so focused on reason. And what reason stands by and allows antisemitism?

[43 : 46] What reason can you give for that? So he drives them away. And then the last verse. And Paul, after this, tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed fence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila, having shorn his head, and conerea, for he had a vow.

So Paul continues there after this. This is a good while. Paul did not let political or religious pressure determine or direct his ministry. So here you have religious pressure, political pressure, and Paul's like, that's not going to determine or direct what I do.

And then there's this vow. I'm not going to go a ton into this because I'm not 100% sure what it is in everything I've read. But it's a Nazarite vow, it seems to be. That would be from Numbers 6.18, where it's a vow of separation, where then at the end of it, they would shave their head, they'd come and burn the hair with a sacrifice as well.

There's no specific time frame for this. Rabbinical tradition seems to be 30 days. We're going to see Paul, who wants to quickly get back to Jerusalem the next time we get together.

And it seems like having to do with this, but at the same time, he's already shaved his head. You wouldn't do that apart from ending the vow in Jerusalem. So I think what it looks like to me is Paul's vow was done in sincerity and faith.

[45 : 00] He was still a Jew. He never threw off his Judaism. And a Jew who comes to Christ is going to have a whole lot more meaning in their culture than we would as Americans.

So Paul's vow was done in faith and sincerity. We're going to see later on in Acts 21 where I think he takes another vow or joins in with those taking a vow that's not done in sincerity. That's when he goes back to Jerusalem and they say, hey, here's some guys who are about to fulfill their vow.

Be their sponsor. Go to the temple. So the Jews don't think you're like breaking the law. Paul goes along with them. And it starts this whole saga then where he ends up with Agrippa and Felix.

And God uses that. But I don't think at that instance it was done in faith and sincerity. We know Hebrews tells us without faith it's impossible to please God. And then Concrea.

The only thing we know about that is that he mentions that at the end of Romans when he's giving his salutations, kind of signing off his letter. He says, I commend unto you Phoebe, our sister, which is a servant of the church, which is that Concrea, that you receive her in the Lord has become saints.

[46 : 11] And that you assist her in whatever business she has need of. For she has been a secure of many and of myself also. So Paul goes there, meets this woman, and she seems to help them in the ministry.

If you look on our map real quick as we close. There you can see next to Corinth is Concrea. That was, they would bring the ships up by Athens up to there.

And then they would drag them across the land into Zionian Sea to get to Delphi instead of going around by Sparta. So that's kind of what it was known for, that location.

But Paul, in writing his letter to the Corinthians, he says, And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And then this is the verse we had read. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom.

[47 : 15] Right? No soliciting. No enticing. But in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Man's wisdom. Man's wisdom is contained in a mind that God created. Right? We don't want our faith to stand in man's wisdom. Which is greater? The creator or the creation? The one who creates? The one that's created. Right? Obviously created.

The smoke and mirrors of man's wisdom cannot compare to the demonstrable reality of the Spirit. Right? The Spirit is concrete. Concrete. It's a very hard place to live. But the wisdom of man is just, it's all illusion. It's just smoke and mirrors. Where the Spirit is demonstrable. And that's what we're supposed to be living in. And in a world where unfortunately we can't trust the civil government. Where we're watching, remarkably, the Jews being kicked out of places. Like Paul, what does he do? [48 : 18] There's the backdrop of all this. Claudius and all this stuff going on. Paul just continues to preach the gospel. And it's the same for us. Well, let's pray.

Lord, thank you as we've come through these verses, Lord. Paul's been at Corinth. Next we're going to see him heading off to Ephesus. And Lord, as you take him from place to place to place. And just seeing his personal walk with you, that journey of his faith. It just seems like everywhere he goes, he's a hero. But then we see inside of his heart, and he's like, man, I was afraid. I was terrified. And Lord, how faithful you were to remove fear. And Lord, I pray tonight, as we live in a world that's falling apart, Lord, that we cannot trust from one day to the next what our government says. One day they're like, we're with you. And the next day they're like, we're going to kill you. And Lord, we saw that tonight with Galileo. One moment he seems like a man doing the right thing. And the next, totally off base. [49 : 18] And Lord, without you, there's no moral compass. So Lord, let us not put our trust at all in man's wisdom. But Lord, in the demonstrable power of the Spirit. Lord, each of us can demonstrate that in our own lives.

That we have been changed and touched by your Spirit. I love you, Lord. Thank you for this family. I pray that you take us to our homes now. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen.