

I. Introduction

- A. Holiness, our journey, my journey
 - 1. Humility, intimacy, faithfulness/obedience
 - 2. Result: holiness
- B. How can we become something that seems impossible?
 - 1. Truth: God's demand of us is beyond our capability.
 - 2. Grace: God's love for us is beyond what we deserve.
 - 3. *What God's truth demands, His grace will provide.

II. Paul and the presence of God (Acts 23:1-11)

But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them. (Acts 22:30)

- A. *And looking intently at the council, Paul said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day." (Acts 23:1)*
 - 1. I've lived my life always trying to please God.
 - 2. 1 Timothy; chief of sinners; looking back at his misguided zeal, deceiving himself
 - 3. Not always actually pleasing God but the intent was there
- B. *And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?" (Acts 23:2-3)*
 - 1. Exchange: Paul immediately responds with defensive speech/repay evil with evil/revile/insult
 - 2. According to Paul's writing, he is in the wrong as his response violates the example of Jesus: if someone strikes you on the right ...
- C. *Those who stood by said, "Would you revile God's high priest?" And Paul said, "I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" (Acts 23:4-5)*
 - 1. Paul recognizes he has not imitated Christ here—imitate me as far as I imitate Christ
 - 2. Genuine apology; reacted in the flesh
 - 3. Didn't know: 1) Possibly wasn't in priestly garments, 2) high turnover of high priesthood (between 37-70, 28 different high priests)
- D. *Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial." (Acts 23:6)*
 - 1. Knowing tension between, points specifically to the resurrection of the dead
 - 2. Secondly tactical but primarily, the central issue of Jesus' resurrection from the dead
- E. *And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. Then a great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and contended sharply, "We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?" (Acts 23:7-9)*

- Argument revolves around theology/doctrine instead of the person of Jesus Christ

- F. *And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks. (Acts 23:10) - Required to protect Paul*
- G. *The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome." (Acts 23: 11)*
 - 1. Paul almost torn apart three times in the last 24 hours - Am I going to live through the end of this day?
 - 2. *The Lord stood by him*
 - a. He was not alone; Jesus said His followers would face persecution and He would be with them.
 - b. The presence of Christ is that which empowers and equips all we do for Him.
 - 1) Courage in the midst of threat and the unknown
 - 2) Presence in persecution, the uncomfortable, the inconvenient, and the awkward
 - 3. *take courage*
 - a. Don't give up or fear or despair.
 - b. The presence of Christ, known and experienced, results in courage.
 - 4. *as you have*
 - a. Commended for obedience
 - b. Hiwa: "I'm exhausted to be honest. Been traveling all day and you sort of think, what was all that about. Keeping our eyes on Him and His promises."
 - c. Me: "Obedience is success in the Kingdom, not outcome. Praying that you get rest."
 - 5. *so you must*
 - a. My assignment for you is not over, you will experience all this, all the way to Rome. It will not be the easiest way, it will not be your way.
 - b. But, I will be with you.

III. Jerusalem to Rome

- A. Every one of us who has experienced salvation through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus has a calling and an assignment.
 - 1. Our calling is to a person not a task, it is intimacy with Jesus. This is the same for all of us.
 - 2. Our assignment is going to differ because of what God has prepared for you and I to do and will be revealed through the Holy Spirit and Scripture.
 - 3. The way we stay close to Jesus is by continually humbling ourselves, constantly pursuing Jesus (intimacy), and faithfully obeying what the Scripture and Spirit ask of us. It is in this way and only this way that we become like Jesus, that we become holy.
 - 4. "Know for certain that the moment we stop obeying God, we start faking Christianity. We must understand that the 'knowledge of the Lord' is not a ten-week course to be passed; it is an unfolding experience with Jesus Christ. It starts with rebirth and faith in Jesus, but it continues on into Christ's own holiness, power, and perfection."
-Francis Frangipane
- B. But to obey, we need the pervasive presence of the Holy Spirit, God in us. Paul knew—in fact, wrote—all the theology about God's presence and his power. But his knowledge of these doctrines did not sustain him. It was the presence of the Almighty God Who filled the vacuum of those doctrines with substance, the very substance of Himself. The Lord stands by ...