



Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions God in the Storms of Life Series, Lesson 52

Lesson Title: Prisoner in Jerusalem

Take Home Point: Take a stand for Jesus.

Warm-Up:

There are many parts of the world today in which Christians take great risk to live and speak as witnesses of Jesus Christ. Throughout Muslim-governed tribes and countries, believers who speak the gospel are executed or forced into exile, cut off from their families. In nations still under communist rule or suffering under oppressive tyranny, Christians are imprisoned, tortured, exiled, and murdered. It is estimated that well over a third of the world's countries are openly hostile to Christianity and take overt action against believers to stop them from speaking the gospel. In our nation, we sometimes are limited by law in how we are allowed to present the Good News to those around us. But in much of the world, it is not how it is done, but that it is done at all, that incurs persecution and martyrdom in the name of Jesus.

Read: Acts 20:24, 21:40 through 23:11

Observation (What happened?):

What specific statement in Paul's address sent this audience into a rage?

What promise did God make Paul in Acts 23:11?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

Why do you think Paul told his own story in addressing the crowd?

Why do you think the Sanhedrin got so upset about Paul being told to go to the Gentiles?

Insight:

In today's reading, notice what story Paul told the crowd that had gathered. It was his own story. He didn't focus on the crowd and tell them they were sinners who needed to be saved; he didn't pound them with scripture verse after verse that revealed God's holiness and their utter inability to reach God by their own works. He certainly could have done either of those, but he didn't. He told the story of his own efforts to "be good enough," how Jesus reached out to him, and his call to tell others the truth. That's what being a witness is – telling someone else what you heard, saw, or experienced. There is a time and place to emphasize the sinner's need and God's requirement for holiness, but mostly Jesus just wants us to be ourselves and tell our story of being redeemed by his wonderful love and sacrifice on our behalf. The rest will follow. And that may mean persecution to some degree, from being shunned by others to imprisonment or death. It is not the philosophical "just a good teacher" Jesus that is a threat to other religions, oppressive forms of government, or those who don't follow him. It is the real Jesus who rescues us from sin and transforms our lives.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

What is your testimony? What have you been a witness to in your life that you can tell others?

Where is God telling you to go so you can testify of his redeeming power and love?