

Faithful in Spite of Hostility

Have you ever faced any hostility for being a Christian? Has anyone ever been ugly to you because of your faith in Christ? Have you been ridiculed or made fun of because of your beliefs? How did you respond to such hostility?

The Apostle Paul was an amazing man; but we must remember that he was completely human, just like you and me. Throughout his ministry people opposed him, put him in prison, and tried to kill him. Yet he never backed down in the face of hostility. As a matter of fact, any time he got a chance, he preached about Jesus.

In Acts 21, Paul was caught by an angry Jewish mob in Jerusalem. They wanted to kill him, but the Romans intervened. Paul was in chains and held by Roman soldiers. He asked the Roman tribune for permission to speak to the bloodthirsty crowd. Read Acts 22 and answer the following questions to learn what Paul did.

- Acts 22:1-2** What did Paul do that got the crowd quieter?
- Acts 22:3** Paul first told his background, to prove that he was a Jew. He was born in _____, but brought up in _____ at the feet of _____ (a very famous rabbi; Acts 5:34-39). He was taught the Law and was _____ toward God.
- Acts 22:4-5** What had Paul done in the past that proved how committed he was to the Jewish Law?
- Under whose authority did he do this?
- Acts 22:6-7** Paul told why his life changed so dramatically. What happened to him on the road to Damascus?
- Acts 22:8** Who spoke to Paul?
- Acts 22:9-10** What did Jesus tell Paul to do?
- Acts 22:11-13** Paul was taken into Damascus, where a man named Ananias came to him with a message from God.
- Acts 22:14-15** Paul next told the crowd why he preached about Jesus Christ throughout the world. What did God tell Paul to do?
- Acts 22:16** God told Paul to be baptized in Jesus' name. True baptism always **follows** salvation.

- Acts 22:17-18** Paul told the crowd that he returned to Jerusalem. What did God tell Paul?
- Acts 22:19-20** What did Paul tell the Lord?
- He thought the drastic change in his life would prove to the Jews that Christianity was for real.
- Acts 22:21** Where did the Lord tell Paul to go, and to whom?
- Acts 22:22-23** The Jews became furious; they wanted to kill Paul right then. Why do you think Paul's last comment made them so angry?
- Acts 22:24** The Romans rescued Paul and took him into their fortress. How did they plan to learn the truth?
- Acts 22:25-26** Paul was a Roman citizen because his father held Roman citizenship (v. 28). What did Paul ask?
- Acts 22:27-28** How had the chief captain obtained his Roman citizenship?
- Acts 22:29** Why was the chief captain (tribune) afraid?
- Acts 22:30** What did he want to learn?
- Who did he call to examine Paul?

The Sanhedrin (“*their council*”) was the “Supreme Court” of the Jewish people. Remember that Jesus had a “trial” before this group, as well as Peter and John (Acts 4), the Apostles (Acts 5), and Stephen (Acts 7). How do you think they will feel about Paul?

Concluding Thoughts: Did Paul back down when confronted with an angry, bloodthirsty mob? Did he deny teaching in the name of Jesus Christ? Did he hire a clever lawyer from the ACLU to defend him on the grounds that his civil rights and his right to freedom of expression were violated?

When Paul faced hostility, he did what he had always done: he preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He didn't back down or deny Jesus (as Peter once did – Matt. 26:69-75). Paul was **faithful**.

Paul told the angry mob what Jesus Christ had done for him. He shared his personal testimony, telling them:

1. What his life was like before meeting Jesus – Acts 22:3-5
2. How and when Jesus saved him – Acts 22:6-16
3. How Jesus made his life different – Acts 22:17-21

We should follow Paul's example when we face hostility.

When someone is angry or hostile toward your faith, tell them:

1. What your life was like before you got saved
2. How and when Jesus saved you
3. How your life has been different ever since

Project: Write your personal testimony using the three points described above. Look for an opportunity to share your testimony with someone this week, especially if you face hostility.