

**Sunday Sermon Review: Week of January 29th, 2023**

**Sermon Series: The Book of Acts**

**Sermon: This is Not What I Expected (Acts 22:30; 23:1-11)**

**Speaker: Pastor Jordan Smalley**

## **Icebreaker**

- If you made a movie, what would it be about?

## **Discussion Questions**

### **Our Response is Our Choice (Acts 22:30; 23:1-5)**

- Paul's opportunity to share the gospel to the council was like a dream come true. It was the opportunity of a lifetime. Describe a time in your life when you had a chance to say something really important. How did that go?
- Have you ever said something you thought was profound or witty, only to be smacked on the mouth for it? Put yourself in Paul's shoes. How do you think he felt after he said this and was struck on the mouth for it?
- Paul has a very human response in the heat of the moment here to being wronged. He knows he didn't deserve that! This has happened to us all. Describe a time when you let your anger get the best of you. How did that work out? How could it have been if you'd let God take control?
- You can't always control what happens to you, but you can always control your response towards what happened to you! Think of a time when you responded to a situation in a "less than Christian" way. Now, imagine how it could have gone if you'd have handled it differently. What would be different?
- Do you speak out against corruption? If so, how do you speak out against it? Is it the right way?
- Despite the reason why you're being persecuted, do you still choose to respond in a way that is pleasing to the Lord?

- Is there a time when you were faced with a hard situation and your response was revenge? How did that turn out?

### **Refocus Our Attention (Acts 23:6-10)**

- In a painful, challenging situation, Paul refocused his attention and got back focused on his hope in the resurrection and on his hope in Jesus! How much different would our response to life's curve-balls be if we kept our focus on our hope in the resurrection? What would that look like?
- When Paul's focus began to change and he got his focus back on his message and his hope in the resurrection, his circumstance did not get better. Still, God was able to begin working in his situation and God was able to defend Paul. Sometimes our circumstances might not change but our focus can! How could you change your focus in order to remember that God is good and he is working on the situation for you?
- When you see that you have gone down the wrong track, how do you refocus your attention back on God?
- Having a lack of faith that God can help you overcome anything, can leave you stuck where you are. Do you truly believe that you can overcome any circumstance with God's help? Why or why not?
- Are you ever tempted to turn to someone or something else, other than God in hard times? Who/what and why?
- What's a current situation you are going through where you feel like you have to defend yourself? How are you going about dealing with the situation? (i.e. scripture, prayer, solo) What is keeping you from surrendering it to God?

### **The Lord is With Us in Our Pain (Acts 23:11)**

*I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. (Psalm 16:8)*

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18)*

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)*

- In one of Paul's darkest moments, THE LORD CAME AND STOOD BY PAUL! Imagine how powerful that would have been. Now, remind yourself that even in your darkest hour, God is with you. How does that change the way you see adversity in your life?
- Are you here today feeling discouraged like Paul? How do these Psalms change the way you focus your attention and give you courage?
- Acts 23:11 reads, "The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." Even though no one in the moment in the Sanhedrin was saved, God was still proud of Paul. How does this verse change how you feel about what success looks like when preaching the gospel?
- Can you persevere with God by your side? He may call you to continue to be in the fire. What is your focus while you are in the fire?
- There are times when you may wait awhile after going through a hard situation to hear from God? In that waiting, how do you center your heart and thoughts on God? How do you keep from spiraling or feeling discouraged?

## **Now What?**

**Encouragement:** Even in our darkest hour and in the pains and challenges of life, God is with us!! His presence is with us!! Hebrews says he will never leave us nor forsake us!! Psalm 16:8 Says, "I know the Lord is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me!!" Psalm 34 says, He is close to the broken hearted! Psalm 46:1 SAYS, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble!

### **Ask:**

- How can you include God in your responses more this week?

- How have your feelings been encouraging you to respond contrary to God's word?

### **Challenge:**

In what ways do you need to change your response this week?

#### 1. Forgive Quickly

There are some things in life that are just out of our control, but you can control how you respond. Do you forgive quickly, or do you hold onto conflict? Why?

#### 2. Humble Yourself

Sometimes it's not someone else's fault or God's fault that we're experiencing pain. Sometimes it's our own refusal to humble ourselves and apologize that's keeping us in the place we're in. What pain in your life is the result of your own stubbornness? What would happen if you let go of that stubbornness?

#### 3. Watch Your Mouth

We can choose not to complain or grumble. We can choose to honor. Instead of grumbling about a situation at work this week, what would it look like to honor your coworkers or boss for their hard work?

#### 4. Turn to God in Prayer

Instead of stewing in the moment, what if we turned to God immediately and trust that He will deal with it in His will? How much better would it be if we trusted Him instead of shouldering that responsibility ourselves?

#### 5. Reach out for help!

There is no reason to suffer through serious hurt and pain alone. What if you gave that pain and suffering away and came to rely on a small group or pastoral counseling? How much easier would your day be?

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord, thank you that we do not have to walk through difficult times alone. Thank you for being our hope in a broken world! Thank you that you

promise to always be with us! You are such a good father. Remind us that even though we cannot control what goes on in our lives, we can control how we respond. Lord, help our responses show others you. May we love others in our responses and to remember to be gentle with our tongues. Would you show us how to encourage others with the encouragement you give us daily. Lord, guide us and lead our steps this week as we walk out what we have learned. Help us be a light to the darkness in this world. We love you, we thank you! In Jesus's name, AMEN!