

A Tender Heart, A Tough Hide

The Life and Ministry of Paul—part 9

August 21, 2016

God's transformation process of His children includes building tender hearts and tough hides.

DAY 1: Mob. Enemies; centurion to the rescue

1. This week we'll look at the lunacy, hypocrisy and the ferocious resistance aimed at the Apostle Paul. If you are driven by emotions, or experiences to anchor you in this life, you are in for rough seas!

2. By the time of Acts 21, **Paul's three missionary journeys are over**. He is back in Jerusalem reporting on the last missionary journey.

*Acts 21:27 When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They **stirred up the whole crowd** and **seized him**,²⁸ shouting, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who **teaches** all men everywhere **against our people** and **our law** and **this place**. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place."*

3. The Jewish men from the province of Asia jumped to some ignorant and terrible conclusions. The charges are overblown, exaggerated, and trumped up baloney!

4. Sometimes, rotten human nature makes a "straw man" (a caricature) of what it wants to hate, and then denounces the person as if the person is the "straw man" they concocted. Politicians are notorious for this, and experts at it, but creating a straw man and then denouncing that straw man is something everyone knows how to do.

Acts 21:30 The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut.

³¹ *While they were **trying to kill him**, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the **whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar**.*

5. The centurion's job is to keep order, and if he didn't his job was in jeopardy. The Romans ride to the rescue, and what a mess they find. Paul has been beaten to a pulp. The soldiers are going to take Paul to the barracks for safe-keeping. Then a sudden twist no one saw coming.

6. Paul asks the centurion for permission to speak to the mob! I would have been looking for a lawyer.

7. Would you have asked to speak to the mob?

DAY 2: Paul's testimony (Acts 22)

1. Paul shares his testimony with a hostile, bent-on-murder crowd. When you share your testimony (faith-story) with someone you usually start with something about your life **before** you came to faith in Christ.

Acts 22:3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. ⁴ I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, ⁵ as also the high priest and all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

2. In making a speech you always want your audience to identify with you. Go back in these three verses and underline the sad points where Paul's audience could identify with him.

3. The second part of a testimony is clearly detailing **how** you came to Christ.

Acts 22:6 "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. ⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?' ⁸ "Who are you, Lord?' I asked. "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. ⁹ My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. ¹⁰ "What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. "Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'

4. Paul realizes that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, the Messiah, and is extending mercy and grace to Paul in salvation.

5. The last part of your testimony is detailing something of your life **after** you came to Christ.

Acts 22:11 My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me. ¹² "A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. ¹³ He stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very moment I was able to see him.

Acts 22:14 "Then he said: 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. ¹⁵ You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.' ¹⁷ "When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸ and saw the Lord speaking. 'Quick!' he said to me. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' ¹⁹ "Lord,' I replied, 'these men know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. ²⁰ And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' ²¹ "Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

6. All “hell breaks loose” at the mention of the Gentiles. How do you see his tough hide?

7. How do you see his tender heart, even for people who would kill him?

DAY 3: "Taking courage."

1. Let's pick up at the end of yesterday's devotional.

Acts 22:21 "Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

²² The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!"

Acts 22:23 As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, ²⁴ the commander ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and questioned in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this.

²⁵ As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"

2. He was about to get whipped by the Romans, but appealed to his Roman citizenship.

3. The next day the Roman commander took Paul before the Jewish Sanhedrin. Paul uses the "divide and conquer" strategy! Half of the Sanhedrin are Pharisees and half are Sadducees.

Acts 23:6 Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead." ⁷ When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸ (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.)

4. The disagreement became so heated that the Roman soldiers had to rush in to save Paul from being beaten again. Paul is taken back to the Roman barracks. Meanwhile, the Roman cohort came up with a plan. Get Paul out of town, that night!

5. Imagine you are Paul. Virtually everywhere you go, you have heated opposition. You've experienced floggings and beatings, been misunderstood, falsely accused, arrested and taken into custody for your own protection! I wonder what Paul was thinking at this moment.

Acts 23:11 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."

6. Think of the impact this must have had on Paul!

a. Why should he "take courage?"

b. How would this bring reassurance to Paul?

c. How do you think this impacted how Paul saw those who were out to get him?

7. How could Jesus' visitation with Paul strengthen you?

DAY 4: Governor Felix

1. God uncovers a plot to assassinate Paul. The Romans decide to ship Paul out of town, under the cover of darkness. He is taken to Governor Felix, the successor to Pontius Pilate. The trials before Felix was a mockery of justice, with false witnesses and empty accusations.

2. In spite of hearing false testimony, Paul begins to speak.

*Acts 24:10 When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: "I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; **so I gladly make my defense.***

¹¹ You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

¹² My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. ¹³ And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. ¹⁴ However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, ¹⁵ and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. ¹⁶ So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. ¹⁷ "After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. ¹⁸ I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. ¹⁹ But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. ²⁰ Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin-- ²¹ unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: 'It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.'"

3. Did he stick to the facts of the case? (vv. 11-13)

4. What was his mood? Defensive? Argumentative? Name-calling? How would you describe his mood? (v. 10)

5. He names his original accusers, who don't happen to be in court to testify! (vv. 17-19)

6. He puts some gospel facts on the table for enemy and governor/court alike!

7. Felix adjourns the court when he doesn't know what else to do. Delay, delay, delay. Paul is kept in custody but Felix sent for Paul to have further discussions about the faith!

Acts 24:25 As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." ²⁶ At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him. ²⁷ When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

8. What things strike you about Felix?

DAY 5: Governor Festus (Acts 25)

1. After two years, Festus is appointed as the new governor. A new trial begins in Caesarea.

Acts 25:8 Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar."

Acts 25:9 Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?"

Acts 25:10 Paul answered: "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well.

¹¹ If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

¹² After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

3. The most astounding thing about his defense is what he doesn't say! You don't hear any resentment, no vindictive words, nothing inflammatory. He could have appealed to his education. He could have appealed to the injustice of sitting in a prison for the last two plus years.

4. Festus' response was similar to Felix's. Take the weasel way out. Festus tries to move the venue back to Jerusalem. Paul pulls out the "Roman citizen card" and appeals to Caesar himself. (25:11)

5. How did Paul last through all this nonsense?

6. He stood on the faithfulness of God, and the sovereignty of God to accomplish the purposes of God. God had promised that Paul would go to Rome one day, and Paul believed this was going to be the way there, on Rome's "dime!"

7. All through this season of Paul's life he demonstrates a tough hide and a tender heart!

a. How have you seen his tough hide?

b. How have you seen his tender heart?

8. How tough is your hide? How tender is your heart?