The Book of Acts Lesson 38

Acts 21:17-40

“Clarifying a Muggy Misunderstanding“

# Paul followed the Will of God

1. In the previous passage God warned Paul about the seriousness of what he was engaging in.
2. Jesus never painted a picture of ease and tranquility for those who choose to follow Him.
   1. They that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.
   2. He told us not to marvel if the world hates us, they hated Him too.
3. Your Christian life is a commitment to the savior.
   1. In Baptism you identified publicly that you believe that He is who the Bible says He is.
   2. As disciples of Jesus we ought to reflect his character and priorities in our lives.
4. God wants to direct and guide us, we must be willing to listen to His guidance and obey, even if it is hard.

# Paul was misunderstood by his audience.

1. The Jewish community, both believers and nonbelievers thought that Paul wanted to get rid of the law.
   1. Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it.
   2. Christianity does not stand in opposition to the Old Testament.
2. They once again perceived him as a threat and took to the method of an angry mob to try to stop him.
3. Paul did not take this misunderstanding lightly.
   1. Society tells us many times to disregard what others think.
   2. We should not be manipulated or overly influenced by what others think, but if we are being a hindrance to the gospel, we must question if we are glorifying God by our actions.
   3. Paul cared about people and was willing to listen to their misconceptions to try to understand them.
      1. We can too often be so focused on making our point that we don’t stop long enough to really listen to what others are trying to tell us.
      2. It will help us greatly if we make an effort to understand why others are offended or confused by our words or actions before we try to correct them.

Transition: If anyone had the authority to say “It is going to be this way whether you like it or not!” Paul did. But he didn’t use his position to do that. He instead makes an effort to clarify His work in the world.

# Paul went to great lengths to bridge the gap of knowledge between himself and those he was trying to reach.

1. He went and performed a vow for the sake of the Jewish believers.
   1. This does not mean that Paul was advocating salvation by works.
   2. He wrote the many epistles that make it very clear that salvation is by faith alone.

1. Paul was willing to reason with the angry mob and prepared to address them at the end of this chapter.
   1. He addressed them in their Hebrew tongue.
   2. He addressed them with the permission of the presiding authority.
2. Something very important about to realize about the Christian life is that we will be misunderstood.
   1. Our intentions will often be seen as manipulative or fake.
   2. We tend to be labeled as closed minded fanatics.
   3. Our desire to obey God will sometimes bring unwanted attention:
      1. Ridicule
      2. Anger
      3. Criticism
3. When this happens it is important that we not disregard it, but to be ready to give an answer.
   1. There is nothing crazy about serving a God who has shown Himself faithful.
   2. The gospel is the only way to get to heaven.
   3. Our beliefs are not based on man’s opinion or latest theory.
      1. They are based on the Bible.
      2. They are what have been handed down to us by godly me of the past.
   4. Though our faith requires that we sometimes disregard sight because of what the Bible says:
      1. The wicked prospering.
      2. Trials in life in spite of serving God.
   5. God is a God of order and reason.
4. May we not give the enemy ammunition because of our unwillingness to engage in conversation about why we believe and do the things we do.
   1. This requires that we study the Bible.
   2. This requires that we be willing to overcome shame and embarrassment to defend our faith in the face of opposition.