



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 157 - Out of the Frying Pan, into the Fire (Acts 21-23)

Jewish Outrage - Roman Response

Sometimes it's hard to understand why the mob of Jews turned against Paul so quickly. But if we compare their response to something we are extremely fond of, then we might understand it better.

- What building, memorial or monument is most loved by your community or the city in which you live? How would people react if they found it vandalized or defaced by graffiti?
- How can this help us understand the Jewish outrage and mob attack after they heard rumors Paul had defiled the temple by bringing in a Gentile?
- How did the timely arrival of the Roman soldiers save Paul?

Time to Play the Citizen Card

A true master of timing, Paul waited to play his Roman citizenship card after the tribune had violated Roman law by illegally binding him and was preparing to flog him. This gave the apostle considerable leverage, as he sought to address the Jewish leadership on his terms, rather than theirs.

- Why do you think Paul sometimes allowed himself to be beaten (in Philippi, for example, in Acts 16), when at other times he used his citizenship to prevent it?
- How was Paul able to use the tribune's guilt over violating Paul's Roman rights in his own favor?

Uproar in the High Court

There's a phrase that goes "out of the frying pan, and into the fire." You've probably heard it before. Paul had just escaped the Jewish mob in the temple. Now he wants to be brought before the Jewish ruling council—the same group that had condemned Jesus to death and had stoned Stephen. It could be that Paul knew he wouldn't be able to share the Gospel, so he didn't even try. Instead, he knew the Sadducees rejected spirits, angels and the resurrection, while the scribes and Pharisees believed in all of them.

- Why might Paul's belief in the resurrection have been a logical starting place for him to preach the Gospel to the Jewish high court?

Look at the reaction of the scribes in Acts 23:9, as they speak against the Sadducees: "We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?"

- When faced with two sects of Judaism that were totally at odds about the resurrection, why would it be natural for Paul to aim his Gospel presentation at one group, i.e. the scribes and Pharisees who believed in the resurrection, and not at the Sadducees as well?
- What lesson can we learn about presenting our witness to people with whom we are sharing the good news of Jesus' salvation?