

“Grace Under Pressure”

November 26, 2017

Acts 21:34-22:21

(Background: Paul is now in Jerusalem, having left Ephesus—a city dramatically turned around—from a witchcraft hub to a revival center. A city that once “openly maligned” him now weeping and embracing him at his departure (Acts 20:37). In a similar way, he shares the heart of Father with Jerusalem.)

CORE: Paul is ministering between “beatings”—one from an angry mob and another planned by the Roman soldiers arresting him. Before the next beating, he asks to address the angry crowd. His courage, compassion, and transparency shine brilliantly!

(NOTE: Pressure either breaks pipes or produces diamonds—our choice)

Even under pressure, Here’s how we can SHINE:

1. SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY

- Just as Jesus looked beyond the shame of the cross—to see the “joy set before Him” (Heb. 12:2) *(i.e., He saw us set free & restored to Him)*
- The crowd was resisting the very thing their hearts longed for!
- In any relationship—we are moving to **CONNECT** or **DISCONNECT**
- Paul chose connection—speaking their language & treating them as family (i.e., “brothers & fathers”)

2. OPEN YOUR HEART

- 2 Cor. 6:11-13
- He spoke with disarming transparency—telling his story (with redemptive honesty)
- **YOUR** story is powerful, too—and no one else tells it like you!

3. BE TRANSPARENT WITH GOD

- Where all transparency begins
- **PRAYER** is **INTIMACY** with God—trusting the “all-knowing” One
- God relegates His involvement in our hearts to our will & invitation
- “Stop hiding!”—no more “fig leaves” of performance or blaming!
- David said, “Search me, O Lord, and know my heart.”
- When God speaks to us (**RE** our hearts) He still creates!
- Wherever He goes, **HOLINESS** follows—empowering us to purity!
- Freedom in our relationship with Him—converts to all of life!

4. PRAY **WITH** PEOPLE

- Paul's story related directly to Ananias risking it with him!
- Ananias' praying with Paul—released healing, deliverance, fullness
- He called a terrorist—"Brother, Saul" (*"Saul, Saul" was parental call*)
- He spoke faith words: "Receive your sight!"
- He spoke identity: "God...has chosen you"
- He blessed him: "To know His will, to see (Jesus)...and hear the voice of His mouth" (*NOTE: See this word fulfilled in verse 17 & 18*)
- He spoke destiny: "You will be His witness to all men"
- He called him to action: "What are you waiting for?"

5. HAVE HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

- Being "servants of the Lord" does not mean we are "doormats."
- Acts 22:22ff- Paul did not allow the soldiers to beat him as a citizen.
- God cares about our souls & bodies (as well as our spirits)!
 - 1 Thess. 5:23- *"May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless (Lit.- free from defect; healthy)."*
 - 3 John 2:1- *"Dear friends, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well."*
- The level that you allow God to love you, and you love yourself, is the level that you'll love those around you!
- If we're going to love others well, and let compassion flow from our hearts—our souls must be in good health!
- Jesus said, "Be yoked to Me. Learn from Me. And you will have a healthy, rested soul like Mine!" (paraphrase of Matthew 11:29)