

Acts: *The Spirit, the Church and the Spread of God's Word*

Our Message of Hope

Acts 23:1-11

Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, June 14, 2020

[Read Isaiah 9:2,6; 40:4-5]

When pain and confusion start to swirl, it's essential that we return to the foundational truths of our faith: Jesus is still Lord and King, He has not abandoned us, and He's at work in our world—using His people to proclaim an eternal message of hope rooted in the truth of the Gospel!

[Read Acts 22:30-23:11]

How should we communicate this message of hope?

I. Don't Get Lost in Debate without Highlighting the Heart of Our Hope

Acts 23:6 “But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, ‘Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!’”

As Paul gets shuffled from one authority to the next and stands on trial over and over, he keeps bringing it back to Jesus and the resurrection.

What is it that you spend most of your time debating and arguing about? Bring it back to Jesus and the hope of the Gospel.

II. Don't Be Surprised When People React to Our Message of Hope

Acts 23:9 “Then there arose a loud outcry...”

Acts 23:10 “Now when there arose a great dissension...”

“Outcry” in Greek = shouting in the midst of controversy; “dissension” = an uproar or riot.

The meeting got so out of control that the Roman Commander pulled Paul out of the room thinking that the crowd might tear him to pieces. This was no mild controversy!

III. Don't Be Confused about What He's Called Us to Do

Acts 23:11 “But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, ‘Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness in Rome.’”

God has called us to testify and bear witness that there *is* an answer, there *is* a Savior, and there *is* an eternal solution to the sinful mess we're in, in our world.

In verse 11, Jesus is restating His original commission from Acts 1:

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Just prior to this commission, the disciples were asking something that prompted these words from Jesus that would correct them and adjust their focus and attention:

Acts 1:6-7 “Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ ⁷ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.’”

The question of “when” is God’s business, but the question of “what” is ours. In other words, *what* are we supposed to be doing and *what* did God give us to get it done?

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses...”

God gave us the message of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim it!

The Gospel:

- All of us are sinners by nature and by choice.
- God gave us the Ten Commandments so that we would see how sinful we are and know that we need a Savior.
- God sent His Son into this world to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.
- He lived the only perfect life, keeping God’s law perfectly.
- When He died on the cross, it was in payment for our sins and not His own because He had no sin of His own. He became a substitute for us and took the punishment that should have been ours.
- When He rose from the dead, He proved to all the world that He is the Son of God who can take away the sins of the world.

2 Corinthians 5:21 “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

IV. Don’t Think that He’s Left You to Do It Alone

Acts 23:11 “But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, ‘Be of good cheer, Paul...’”

God knows where you are right now even if you feel like no one else knows what you’re going through or is willing to stand by you. Your Savior does and He is with you!

We tend to equate deliverance with the assurance that God is with us. But God—more times than we would like—chooses to meet us in the midst of what we’re going through instead of delivering us out of it.

To “be of good cheer” or “take courage” is the Greek word “tharseo” which means to be marked by confidence or assurance.

We can be assured God is with us and for us no matter how unpleasant things around us may seem.