



Senior Pastor Kevin Flannery

Series: *The Word of God Continues to Spread and Flourish*

Sermon Title: *Faithful Witness in a Hostile World – Acts 21:27-22:21*

Big Idea: The world's hostility can't silence gospel witness—it becomes the very stage where Christ is proclaimed.

Fall Term – Week 7 of 12

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker: What's one quality you admire in people who stay calm under pressure? Have you ever had to speak up for your faith or values in an uncomfortable situation? How did it go?

Read and Reflect on Acts 21:27-22:21

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, "Fellow Israelites, help us! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place." ²⁹ (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.) 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. ³² He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³ The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. ³⁵ When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers. ³⁶ The crowd that followed kept shouting, "Get rid of him!" ³⁷ As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, "May I say something to you?" "Do you speak Greek?" he replied. ³⁸ "Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the wilderness some time ago?" ³⁹ Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people." ⁴⁰ After receiving the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic: ²² ¹ "Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense." ² When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said: ³ "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I 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 the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished. 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." 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. ¹⁴ "Then he said: 'The God of our ancestors 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 people 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 to me. 'Quick!' he said. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.' ¹⁹ "'Lord,' I replied, 'these people 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.' "

Sermon and Scripture Application Discussion:

The Gospel Provokes Opposition (Acts 21:27–36)

1. When Paul was falsely accused in the temple (Acts 21:27–29), how does his experience remind us of Jesus' words in John 15:20, "If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also"? What can we learn

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about remaining faithful when misunderstood or opposed? What do you think it would feel like to stand before a hostile crowd the way Paul did?

2. As Paul calmly and respectfully spoke to the Roman commander in Greek (Acts 21:37–40), how does he model Jesus' instruction in Matthew 10:16 to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves"? What does this teach us about godly composure under pressure? If you could ask Paul one question about this moment in Jerusalem, what would it be?

The Gospel Creates Opportunity (*Acts 21:37–22:2*)

3. When Paul addressed the angry crowd in their own language, Aramaic (Acts 22:1–2), why do you think they became quiet and listened? How can speaking to people in their "heart language" help us share Christ more effectively today?
4. Even as Paul stood in chains before a hostile crowd, he saw an opportunity to testify rather than defend himself. How does his example challenge our view of difficult situations—as problems to escape or as platforms for the gospel? Has God ever used a hard situation in your life to open a door for His work?

The Gospel Transforms Lives (*Acts 22:3–21; 2 Timothy 2:9*)

5. Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:6–11) completely changed his direction in life. What does this story reveal about how God opens our eyes to see His truth and redirects our purpose?
6. When Ananias greeted Saul with the words, "Brother Saul, receive your sight" (Acts 22:13), what does that moment reveal about the grace that turns enemies into family? How might that kind of grace shape our relationships with others?
7. After Paul shared his vision in the temple and the Lord said, "Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21), the crowd erupted again. How does this moment show that, as Paul later wrote, "the word of God is not chained" (2 Timothy 2:9)?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You that You turn weakness into witness. Make us faithful in our workplaces, our neighborhoods, and our homes. Use us—like You empowered Paul by Your Holy Spirit—to show the world that You are alive, and that Your gospel still changes everything.

Faith in Action:

- October 28, 6:30 PM, Guys Night Out, Meditation Garden
- October 30, 10:30 AM, Meal Ministry Information & Planning Meeting, A120
- November 2, 9 AM & 10:30 AM, Open House **Note: Turn clocks back one hour**