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## Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

### **R2L: Standing Out For Jesus**

*(Acts 22:30-23:11)*

*20:30 But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them. 23:1 Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day." 2 The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?" 4 But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" 5 And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, "YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE." 6 But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!" 7 As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. 9 And there occurred a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" 10 And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks. 11 But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."*

In Matthew 5:16 our Lord Jesus Christ said this, ***“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”*** Whatever else this means, it certainly includes an idea that you and I need to be keenly aware, that idea is this; that as people of God and those whom Jesus purchased for Himself by His own blood, we are to stand out; we are to be seen by others as different, as those committed to the God of the Bible, living according to His word. Sometimes I wonder just how much standing out we really do. It seems at times that we who call ourselves Christians are often found doing much more blending in rather than standing out.

There are several great themes running through the book of Acts. The most prominent and guiding theme is the spread of the gospel, beginning in Jerusalem, moving to regions of Judea and Samaria and then out to the ends of the earth. All of this fulfilling the statement of Jesus back in Acts 1:8. Of course, another theme in the book of Acts is the history of the church; how the church started and how the church made its way to the capital city of the ends of the earth, Rome. Then, as a sort of sub-theme to all of this, there is found in the book of Acts the record of the people of God, the church of Jesus Christ facing increasing opposition. From day one, on the day of Pentecost and the start of the church, there were those who mocking, scorning, ridiculing and deriding those in the church as drunkards (2:13). But from there it only grew worse. After healing a lame man, the Jewish authorities arrested Peter and John and threatened them not to talk about Jesus and His resurrection in Acts 3-4. Again, in Acts 5, the Jewish leaders sought to intimidate the early church by arresting some of the apostles, even beating them (5:40). But the preaching of Jesus continued on as the church stood out.

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Then the opposition increased to include death as Stephen, a fearless and non-politically correct preacher crushed the Jewish leaders in a debate and followed that by delivering a such a convicting message that he was driven out of the city and stone to death at the direction of Saul, one day to be known as the Apostle Paul. But the people of the church continued to stand out and preach the gospel.

After the murder of Stephen, the opposition and persecution of the church increased all the more, some of it even being ordered by Herod, the king, who had Peter arrested in Acts 12 only to see him released by the hand of God. We know that much of the early opposition and persecution of the church came by the hand of Paul. But once Paul met up with the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus in Acts 9, the one who had been the greatest persecutor of the church had now become one of the most persecuted of Christians. On every missionary journey, Paul encountered opposition from unbelieving Jews. He confronted a false prophet on the island of Cyprus and was pursued everywhere he went for preaching Jesus including Pisidian Antioch (13:45); Iconium (14:2); Lystra (14:19); Thessalonica (17:5); Berea (17:13); Corinth (18:6-13); Ephesus (19:9); Corinth again (20:3); and in Jerusalem, where we last left Paul (21:27).

As we come to our text in Acts 23, let me remind you that Paul is once again facing hostile opposition from the Jewish leaders. Back in Acts 22, Paul had been attacked and beaten on the temple grounds. It was only because of the Roman soldiers' intervention that Paul was not killed. The commander of the Roman forces, Claudius Lysias, sought to find out what Paul had done to incite such a mob. Unable to get the information he wanted from the raucous crowd, Lysias used the brutal method of flogging to try to get Paul to confess his wrongdoing. Then, having found out Paul was a Roman citizen, thus making it illegal for him to be beaten, Lysias sought a different way to get the information he wanted.

This brings us to our text, beginning in Acts 22:30, where Lysias summons the Jewish council to assemble before him to figure out what Paul had done to warrant such hostility. And it is here in our text that we find this continued theme; that when the followers of Jesus Christ stand up and stand out there will be increasing hostility for the church. Such is a timely message for us, for while so many in the church are vacillating between holding fast to the Word of God or capitulating to the opinions of men, we are certainly finding out that when Christians take their stand on the Word of God, there will be opposition and persecution. Here in our text we learn some lessons from the example of Paul as to what to expect and how to respond when your beliefs and convictions are challenged by unbelievers. In short, we see Paul's resolve to stand out and stand up for truth. We will divide the text into two thoughts...

### **I. If you are consistently living for Jesus, you will “stand out” (22:30-23:10).**

This may seem like an obvious statement. History is filled with men who because of their strong convictions for Jesus “stood out.” But the thought that my mind grappled with was this: do I really “stand out” for Jesus? Are people looking at my life, my habits, my words, my actions, my parenting, my worship, my fellowship with other believers, my outreach to unbelievers and noting that I am truly different from the world? If you are consistently living for Jesus, there will be times, lots of times when you “stand out” among others. This is not to be optional, it is a certainty. How do you know if you are consistently living for Jesus? You are standing out in such a way that causes unbelievers to take note, sometimes to take offense, and sometimes even to oppose us.

Do you realize that too often we Christians focus on what we *get* because we are Christians rather than thinking on what it *costs* to be a Christian. Let me be clear here. There is

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no amount of money or personal merits that earn us our standing with God. In fact, those that think you can merit the favor of God cannot be Christians. If we are to be saved, we must admit our hopeless and lost condition because of our sins against God. We must recognize we are spiritual bankrupt and that rather than deserving blessings from God, we actually deserve His wrath. We must recognize that unless God did something, there is nothing we could do to thwart the coming judgment of God upon our sins. Until we do this, we will never be rightly ready to receive the gift that He freely offers. What is that gift? It is the gift of salvation which includes the forgiveness, the pardon of our sins against a Holy God; acceptance by God as children rather than rebels; and all of this based solely upon the work of His Son, Jesus Christ, upon the cross and confirmed by the empty tomb and His being taken up into heaven. And the promise of God is this, that whoever believes that His Son, Jesus Christ, has done this for him or for her, receives the gift of eternal life; what we call, “salvation.” Let there be no doubt, salvation is a free gift to all who believe. The reason why each and every one of us can be saved today is because of this truth; Jesus paid it all.

But even with all this, let no one think for a moment that salvation is cheap. That just because you did nothing to become a Christian, that being a Christian is without cost. For the moment you become one with Jesus, you also become a minority in the world. According to the promise of Jesus, the moment we determine to become followers of Jesus, we will be hated by the world. The “religious” rather than the faithful in Christ will ridicule. The secularists, irreligious and unbelievers will mock and scorn the believers. In other words, if you truly follow Jesus, you will stand out and often standing out is simply to be a target. Jesus said in John 15:20...

***Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you...***

If we would follow after Jesus, we will stand out and that is what we find Paul doing here in our text. Through this scene we find out what happened to Paul and how through it all, he continued to stand out as a witness for Jesus. My prayer is that we would follow his example. So, let us note three things that take place in our text through which Paul stands out...

### **A. Paul is accused (22:30)**

***First***, according to verse 30, we find **Paul is accused**. Reading verse 30... ***“But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.”***

You might remember that the Roman commander, Claudius had not yet figured out what was Paul’s crime. In Acts 22 there were a number of accusations being made but not one of them made any sense to him. In order to get this problem solved, he thought it best to assemble the Jewish Sanhedrin, the ruling council or the Jewish “supreme court” so that he might have some intellectual “cool heads” to tell him what was going on with Paul.

What you need to remember is that Paul, in his days before coming to Christ, used to run with this crowd. It was this Council that approved the death sentence on Stephen. But now the tables are turned. The one who had been the greatest persecutor of the church was now the most persecuted one of the church. Lysias was sure that these men would give him a clear account of

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the accusations against him. But what happens next must have surprised Lysias. Being “set” before these men so that the accusation might be heard, we come to the second scene...

### B. Paul is attacked (23:1-5)

**Second**, according to Acts 23:1-5, **we find Paul is attacked**. Reading in verse 1 again... **Paul, looking intently at the Council...** Notice the phrase, “looking intently” – it is the same verb that Luke used in Acts 1:10 to describe the disciples’ **“gazing intently into the sky”** as the Lord ascended into heaven. The Greek *atenizo* means “to gaze upon, to fix one’s eyes upon, to stare.” Why is Paul looking so intently at these men? Our text does not say but it would seem reasonable that he is looking to see who he may know on this council. For just some 20-25 years earlier, Paul knew many of these men. It would seem that this intense gaze would have communicated to the men on that council Paul’s conviction as well as his compassion for their blindness to the gospel.

Just a few years before this meeting, Paul penned the words of Romans 9:1-3 saying, **“I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh...”** When your family or beloved friends who do not know Jesus come into your presence, do they see in your eyes the conviction of your faith and the compassion of Christ?

The idea behind this intense gaze is that it took some time. I don’t know how long; 30 seconds? A minute? Maybe two? But then Paul spoke and notice what he said in verse 1: **Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, “Brethren...”** There is something easily missed here. According to tradition, the proper way to address the men of the ruling council would be, “Rulers and elders of people...” exactly as Peter did back in Acts 4:8. But Paul says, what? “Brethren...” If you were called before the justices of the Supreme Court (and mostly likely any court of law), you would not address them by saying, “What’s up bros!” Paul’s greeting here has a tone of familiarity and, even more importantly, a tone of equality. Then he goes on to say, **I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.** Do not forget that he is standing before these men to defend himself against their accusations. And his first defense is one of conscience. Paul says he has lived his life with a **“perfectly good conscience before God...”** If you know anything about Paul’s past, you might wonder how he could say this. Let me tell you something important to remember; a person can have a good or clear conscience and yet be misguided or misinformed as was Paul when he was persecuting Christians. Unless the conscience is guided by the word of God, a person can think and live as though he or she is guilt-free and yet be guilty. This is what our culture is doing, being wilfully ignorant of God’s expectations on the way people live, they sleep just fine at night. And even more devastatingly, our churches are filled with people who are convinced they are going to heaven because of their own goodness; their conscience is good in their own eyes, but this is because they are misinformed.

When Paul says his conscience was good, it was because his intent had always been to please God and not man. This was true before coming to Christ as well. He was obviously wrong about what he had believed, being a sinner, but at the time his conscience was clear. That was his first defense, his clear conscience to please God. Then he moved to his second defense, which was...well, we don’t know because he never got to make it. For as Paul was speaking we

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read in verse 2, **The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth.** Why would Ananias command this? We are not told by Luke here, but we do know some things through history about Ananias. We know that this Jewish high priest was an egocentric, dictatorial ruler. He took office as high priest in 47 AD and serviced for about eleven years. He was considered one of the most corrupt high priests the Jews ever had. Josephus, the famed Jewish historian who lived around that time reported that Ananias stole tithes that should have gone to the common priests. About five years before this account in Acts 23, the governor of Syria sent Ananias to Rome on suspicion of complicity in an outbreak between the Jews and Samaritans, but retained his office. He was very wealthy. In addition, Ananias held a pro-Roman policy that made him despised by most of Israel. It got so bad that around 66 AD, some Jewish insurgents drug him to his death. So, Paul was being accused, for what we do not know; and now he is being attacked. How did he respond? How would you expect the eminent apostle Paul to react? Of course, like Jesus! But, as you note in the text, Paul, being a sinful human being, responded at first the same way most of us would. How do we tend to respond to things like this?

*Is it not our tendency to be defensive when attacked verbally, physically or emotionally?* In truth, Ananias broke Jewish law in ordering Paul to be struck on the mouth and Paul knew the law very well and so responded with a verbal attack. Look at what he said in verse 3, **Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?"** The Jews would paint their tombs white as a warning to the people not to touch them and thus to become defiled Paul was using a word picture to demean Ananias, saying in effect, “You look all clean and impressive outwardly, but you are full of death and decay inwardly.” For all intents and purposes, Paul called him a hypocrite.

Now, some of us would be inclined to cheer! “Yes, Paul got a deserved lick in!” And then to remember that he did this in front of a hostile crowd. But Paul was not responding biblically, rather he was reacting according to his flesh. What we see here was Paul momentarily losing control of his flesh. For unlike Jesus, who, according to 1 Peter 2:23, **“...while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously...”** Paul did revile here, as we will see in a moment. This is important to note because it shows us that the Word of God does not seek to hide the shortcomings of the people of God. We read in God’s Word how the man after God’s own heart, King David, committed adultery; we read of the great prophet Jonah’s pouting, of one of Jesus’ inner circle, Peter, denying he knows Christ; and now here, of Paul’s reactionary outburst. When we are attacked, we tend to be defensive, right? But what ought we to do?

*It needs to become our practice to respond biblically when attacked.* Let us see this work its way out in verses 4-5 where we read: **4 But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" 5 And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.'"**

I can only imagine that Paul’s tone must have change very quickly and turned much more respectful. Let us never forget that Paul was human. And even as godly as he was, he still sinned and when he sinned...listen...he was willing to admit it, publically when necessary and that confession was based upon Scripture.

Paul quotes from Exodus 22:28 which says, **“You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.”** How many times have we been guilty of that? Yes, but that pastor or elder was a jerk. I would have you note that even though Ananias was clearly a self-seeking leader who

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mistreated not only Paul but the rest of his people, this did not give Paul the right to respond unbiblically in return. Beloved, I promise you there will be many times in life when you will be wronged by others; but for the believer, that never gives us the “right” to react and respond contrary to the Word of God. To put it another way, “it is never right to do wrong to do right.

Some of you may have employers that take advantage of you. Your tendency will be to undermine his authority or to slack off on the job; but that is unbiblical, for you are to do your work heartily as unto the Lord. You might have a parent that says hurtful things to you, and your “natural reaction” will be to become spiteful and lash out with hateful words. Our government may use our tax dollars to pay for things that violate God’s Word and our tendency will be to mock them in conversations with others. But God says that we are not to curse, or speak evil about a ruler of our people.

But pastor, sometimes people in such positions of authority are wrong or abusive. This is true. And this does not mean we cannot object to such things, but we must not curse or speak evil of such a person. Why? Because the Word of God tells us that God Himself has established every human authority, whether a parent or a government and God expects us to respect and honor these human authorities. We must remember that because God puts rulers in place, it is God who will hold them responsible for how they lead. But He holds the rest of us responsible for how we respond to their leadership. This is true for every authority figure, from presidents, to pastors; from city councilmen to church elders, from teachers to coaches and so it goes.

Turn with me to Titus 3. Here, just a couple of years after this event in Acts 23, note what the apostle Paul exhorts on this very subject. In verses 1-2 we read: **“Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, 2 to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.”** We have no reason to believe that this statement came out of Paul’s experience right here in our Acts text. As believers, we are to be known for having a positive reputation when it comes to authority. We are to be known for being civil and respectful toward authority, even when we speak of our disagreements.

We might imagine how Paul could have, or would have thought if he had our minds. Paul could have justified his behavior thinking that because Ananias is a bad leader and technically, not even his leader because as a Christian, only Christ is my high priest, I don’t need to be respectful. In fact, this is one of the men that is part of the very system that killed my Jesus. I don’t owe this man my respect – While it may be true that a man does not deserve respect for the ill manner in which he fulfills his duties of authority, because it is a God-given position of authority, believers are to give the position respect. This is true, teenagers, of your teachers. This is true of our employers and of course our government leaders.

What we find here is Paul, having sinned against God by speaking ill of an authority, taking responsibility for his actions. Our tendency is to be defensive. More often than not, we are wrong and we even know we are wrong but pride causes us to refuse to admit it! What makes Paul stand out is his resolve to respond biblically, as I pray we will resolve. This all brings us to the third event. First Paul was accused; then Paul was attacked; now, in verses 6-10 we see...

### C. Paul takes action (23:6-10)

Third, **Paul takes action** (6-10). While he wrongly reacted in verse 3, and then admitted his wrongdoing in verses 4-5, Paul was not intimidated into silence. Beginning in verse 6, not how Paul himself takes control of this meeting. We read... **But perceiving that one group were**

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**Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"**

This seems to be a strange course of action. What is Paul doing? Rather than being on the defensive, Paul goes on the offense. Since his accusers could not put the issue on the table, Paul did and the way he did reveals to us three things that are to be true of us if we would stand out for Jesus.

## **1. Paul knew people (6a)**

*But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees...*

The idea here is that Paul was “perceiving” – that is, he knew how the people he was speaking to thought. If we are going to stand out for Jesus, we need to be aware of how people think; to help them make links between their lives and spiritual truths.

In 1931, the largest statue of Christ at the time was erected in the Andes Mountains on the border between Argentina and Chile. It is called "Christ of the Andes," and the statue symbolizes a pledge made between the two countries that as long as the statue stands, there will be peace between Chile and Argentina. Shortly after the statue was erected, the Chileans began to protest that they had been slighted. Why? Because the statue had its back turned to Chile. Just when tempers were at their highest in Chile, a Chilean newspaperman saved the day. In an editorial that not only satisfied the people but made them laugh, he simply said, "The people of Argentina need more watching over than the Chileans." There's a fellow that knew how to read people. If you're going to minister with people, you must know people. And that is what Paul was doing here. But in addition to knowing people...

## **2. Paul knew what he believed (6b)**

*Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"*

Now, why would Paul say this? Well, it was clear to Paul that there would be no fair trial and before the conversation got weighed down in politics, Paul put the main issue on the table saying in effect, I believe in the resurrection!

We do ourselves well to recall that his opponents had accused him of being anti-Jewish. By this statement he is revealing that he is not anti-Jewish, and that Christianity itself was not anti-Jewish because it had This was the main issue and Paul stood out unashamedly declaring what he believed. But there is one final thing Paul knew...

## **3. Paul knew that what people believe determines how they behave (7-10)**

*7 As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. 9 And there occurred a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" 10 And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.*

How we need to remember this truth, that what we believe determines how we behave. Paul knew that this Jewish ruling council was made up of members of two parties. The majority

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were known as the Sadducees, and the minority, although very vocal, were known as the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the religious conservatives, believing in predestination, in angels, in spirits, in miracles and most especially, in the resurrection from the dead. The Sadducees believed in the absolute free will of man and not in angels and miracles. Their greatest denial was of resurrection from the dead.

Get the scene...both parties wanted Paul hung out to dry, so to speak. Then Paul pipes up and says, *“I believe in the resurrection.”* In this statement, Paul was standing out, declaring that he believed there to be more to life than what we see. He was declaring that death was not the end of Jesus, for He had risen from the dead. He was declaring that death is not the end for humanity. And with this statement, the Pharisees who had been ready to crucify Paul now declared what in verse 9? *“We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?”* Now, all of a sudden, they are siding with Paul.

But Paul knew this would get the discussion off of him and on to the true matter, what do you believe about the resurrection of Jesus. Paul knew that what one believes will determine one’s behavior. The Pharisees and Sadducees behaved in manners consistent with their beliefs. And the same is true for everyone you talk to. We need to know this. For people who believe that life is all there is, then they will see nothing wrong behaving in ways consistent with what the Bible teaches. They may say they believe in the bible, but if their actions are inconsistent with the Bible and in defiance with the Bible even when confronted with the truth, it is clear they don’t believe the Bible

What we believe determines how we behave. If we believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven, we will stand out. Let us note quickly one more truth that is comforting when we “stand out” and perhaps find ourselves in Paul’s situation where we stand out alone.

### II. If you are living for Jesus, Jesus will always be there with you (23:11).

*But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, “Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.”*

So in the midst of all this trouble and turmoil, Luke takes time to record something else Paul experienced. There are three things in verse 11 that were true of Paul and are true for all who stand out for Jesus.

#### A. We have the Lord’s Presence (11a)

Luke says that *“the Lord stood at his side...”* The world can stand against us, and we might at times feel alone when we stand out. But the truth is this, that the Lord is with us! Just as Jesus stood with Paul, Jesus stands with us. How do we know this? What were the final words of Jesus in the great commission? Do you know them? After commanding us to *“Go...and make disciples...”* He said what? *“And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:19-20)

I love that we can read how events like this one impacted Paul’s life in such a way that he writes about it later. In 2 Timothy 4:16-17, while awaiting execution, notice what Paul writes: *“16 At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth.”*



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If we stand out for Jesus, we have the Lord's presence to encourage and to strengthen us. But there is more...

### **B. We have the Lord's Promise (11b)**

Paul did not simply have the Lord's presence, but also the Lord's promise. Luke records that the Lord **“said”** something to Paul. The reason why we can stand out for Jesus is because we know the promises of God. Now, the Lord truly spoke to Paul, for remember that at this time, the New Testament was not completed. But do not think that the Lord does not speak to us. We have the Word of God. Everything we need for life and godliness is contained herein. So, if you want to have the Lord speak to you, read your Bible. And if you want to have the Lord speak to you audibly, then read your Bible out loud. Here in the Word are the promises of God to us. Finally then...

### **C. We have the Lord's Plan (11c)**

The end of verse 11 records what the Lord said to Paul, the revealing of the Lord's plan for Paul saying, **“Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.”**

If I were Paul, this might have been a bit bewildering, a least at first. Paul had been beaten and hardly allowed to speak in Jerusalem and now You are telling me that in the same way you want me to go to Rome? Do you know that everything went according to God's plan in Jerusalem? Our problem is that we tend to be so results oriented that if we don't see the results we expect our conclusion is what? We have failed! Paul did not really see any results in Jerusalem yet God says that Paul accomplished His purpose. Paul had stood out for Jesus in Jerusalem and now that is what God wanted him to do in Rome.

We need to remember that whether we are young or old; whether in school or in the workplace; whether we are academics or simple-thinking folks, the Lord has called us to stand out for Jesus. How can you know if you are standing out for Jesus? Let me remind you of two things that will help:

1. *The purpose of your life is not about me (ego-centric). Rather...*
2. *The purpose of your life is about Christ (Christ-centric).*

And this is the key to standing out. This world, our country, the state of Arkansas, the cities of Bella Vista, Bentonville, Rogers, Springdale and such, your schools, your workplaces; and even our church needs people resolved to stand out for Jesus. Will you resolve to stand out for Jesus? But pastor, it's frightening and intimidating to stand out for Jesus, how can I do it? You can do it by never forgetting that the Lord stands with you. Fill yourself with His Word and He will stand with you as you stand out for Him.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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