

What is a “Win” from a Kingdom Perspective?

Acts 21-26

MAIN IDEAS

Following God’s call to Macedonia, Paul, Silas and Timothy minister to churches in Thessalonica, Corinth and Ephesus. After a tearful goodbye to the Ephesian elders, Paul and the others set sail for Jerusalem where Paul is arrested in the temple, beaten and begins to share his story before governing authorities.

- Paul is placed on trial from Jerusalem to Rome
- Paul arrested and tried in Jerusalem
- Paul taken to Caesarea to appear before Felix the governor
- Paul appeals to Caesar and appears before King Agrippa

This final journey of Paul follows three previous missionary journeys during which God fulfills his promise to use Paul to carry the gospel to the gentiles. Although his presentations to the governing authorities seem to meet with limited “success,” consider how God continues His work through Paul.

Paul’s appearances before the Sanhedrin, Felix, Festus and Agrippa expose the political realities of the day. The Roman politicians were reluctant to punish Paul, a Roman citizen, but were anxious to keep peace among the Jews and so were inclined to please them. Paul was a “hot potato,” passed from one to the other.

Paul made the resurrection of Jesus the touchstone of his testimony and message. Although his message does not appear to resonate, notice that the platform for the message grows with each of Paul’s testimonies.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

“The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord.”

(Proverbs 21.31)

Reflect on the battles of your life. What will it take to trust in the Lord's purpose and plan for them all?

Think back to a time when you were falsely accused. How did you feel and how did you react? Explore Paul's reaction to his accusers. What lessons can you learn from him?

When Paul is permitted to speak to the people gathered, he shares his testimony. What is the focus of his address? How does it demonstrate Paul's ability to reach his audience? What is it that finally turns the crowd against him?

In the hardest of times it's easy to lose focus on what is truly important in life. Notice Paul's laser focus is on the message of the gospel, especially the resurrection of Jesus. What will you do to keep these at the center of your life during hard times?

These chapters cover more than two years of Paul's life. Looking back, how might he have seen the purpose and plan of God unfold? As you look back over your life, what conclusion can you draw about God's purpose and plan for you and those around you?

GROUP RESPONSE

Paul's abduction, beating and subsequent arrest in Jerusalem was no doubt painful for the Church. How does this persecution further the mission given by Jesus before His ascension (Acts 1:8)? What opportunities did it provide for Paul? How should this change the way we view the ups and downs of DEC's 50-year history?

Again Paul appears before the Sanhedrin to tell his story (chapter 23). What does he notice about the makeup of the group (23:6)? How does he use it to his advantage and what lesson can we draw from this as we seek to reach our communities for Christ?

Paul continues to speak truth to power by appearing before the King, Agrippa. What are the risks and rewards when speaking truth to people in positions of power?

REPRODUCE

Part of becoming a disciple, like Christ, is suffering disappointment, hardship and persecution. These all raise questions in our minds like, "Where is God?" and "Does God really care about me?" The maturing disciple understands that "The horse is made ready for the day of battle but the victory belongs to the Lord" (Proverbs 21:31). Our job is to

prepare for every one of life's battles and trust that God will be victorious through us.

Find an older disciple who can talk with you about trusting in the Lord for victory through the experiences that he/she has been through.

KEY VERSES

From the sermon:

- Acts 21:13-14
- Acts 22:28-29
- Acts 23:26; 24:15; 26:23
- Acts 26:32

Additional verses from the study:

- Matthew 10:16
- 1 Peter 3:15-20
- 2 Timothy 4:7-8