**THE DEFENSE RESTS**

**Acts 21:17-22:21**

**WHEN YOU SERVE GOD FAITHFULLY SOME WILL TRY TO DISCREDIT YOU**

* *“But they have been informed about you—that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or to live according to our customs.”* (Acts 21:21)
* *“When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd, and seized him, 28 shouting, ‘Fellow Israelites, help! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place. What’s more, he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.’ 29 For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.”* (Acts 21:27-29)
* **A life void of any persecution is a life void of faithful service to God.**
* Jesus – *“You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. 12 Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* (Matthew 5:11-12)
* **We should not fear what people will say, but rather find joy and peace in how God responds to our faithfulness.**

**WHEN YOU ARE SLANDERED, PERSECUTED, AND ATTACKED FOR TRUTH TELLING, FOLLOW JESUS AND PAUL’S EXAMPLE OF CALMNESS, HUMILITY, AND LOVE**

* *“As he was about to be brought into the barracks, Paul said to the commander, ‘Am I allowed to say something to you?’ He replied, ‘You know how to speak Greek? 38 Aren’t you the Egyptian who started a revolt some time ago and led four thousand men of the Assassins into the wilderness?’ 39 Paul said, ‘I am a Jewish man from Tarsus of Cilicia, a citizen of an important city. Now I ask you, let me speak to the people.’* (Acts 21:37-39)
* **When we are attacked our natural reaction is to retaliate emotionally, verbally, or physically, but responding calmly with humility and love demonstrates that the Spirit of God lives in us and is leading us.**
* *“Dear friends, don’t be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you. 13 Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”* (1 Peter 4:12-14)
* **Like Paul, when we truly encounter Jesus and put our faith in Him everything changes and we become a new person with a new promise!**
* *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead 4 and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.”* (1 Peter 1:3-4)

**CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION**

**ICE-BREAKER:** Describe a time when someone pulled a prank on you, or you did to someone else that was humorous?

**START THINKING (Observation):**

* What does Acts 21:17-22:21 teach us about God/The Holy Spirit?
* What point does Paul make about his missionary journey? (vs. 19)
* After the warm welcome, what was Paul informed of that was untrue?
* Why did the Jews beat Paul? How did he respond?
* What was the core of Paul’s defense, and message to the crowd?

**DIGGING DEEPER (Understanding and Application):**

* Who is called to “defend” the faith? What does it mean to do that?
* Why should you expect to have people try to discredit you if you stand for God’s Truth? How does that make you feel?
* What can you learn from Paul’s response to false accusations and being beaten?
* How does the following statement impact you: “A life void of any persecution is a life void of faithful service”?
* How do the promises of God in 1 Peter 1:3-4 and 1 Peter 4:12-13 impact your view of persecution and suffering for Jesus?
* What will you do differently based on this study?

**LOVING OUTWARD**

* Who do I you need to share Jesus with this week? Or, who do you need to have a follow-up conversation about Jesus with?
* Who are you inviting/bringing to church next week?