

Barriers of Persuasion

In Acts 22:22-24, an angry mob of Jews called for the death of Paul. They are angry and possess a high level of hatred for the apostle. What caused Paul to be on the receiving end of the wrath of this hostile crowd?

It is important to note that Paul was back in Jerusalem. He had spent the last few years spreading the gospel throughout Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia (Acts 13-20). Upon arriving in Jerusalem with a contribution for the needy saints, he participated in a cultural aspect of the Law (Acts 21:26). Soon after, he was falsely accused of bringing one of his Gentile friends into a restricted part of the temple and was attacked by a Jewish Mob (Acts 21:11-32). They might have killed Paul if the Roman authorities had not stopped them from beating him.

The Romans were confused about Paul's identity (Acts 21:33-38). Paul identified himself and asked to speak to the hostile crowd (Acts 21:39-40). He spoke of his impressive resume as a Jew (Acts 21:1-5), his conversion to Jesus (Acts 21:6-16), and his mission to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 21:17-21).

The speech was not received well for three reasons.

The people had hard hearts.

- Before Paul began speaking, the crowd was determined to reject his message. They already had their minds made up and had negative feelings about Paul.
- Jesus warned Paul that he would experience persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-18). Paul's audience was similar to Stephen's (Acts 7:54-60)
- We can also encounter people who, no matter what evidence we offer them from the gospel, won't believe. Nothing we present will convince them to obey Jesus because they don't want to reform their lives.

The people lacked reason.

- Paul was shocked that these people would not be convicted by the evidence he presented for Jesus being the Messiah (Acts 22:19-20).
- These Jews would not even consider the possibility that Jesus must have been raised because Paul (who at one time violently opposed Jesus) was now risking his life testifying of Him.
- We can also encounter people who, no matter what evidence we offer them from the gospel, won't believe. Nothing we present will convince them to obey Jesus because they don't want to reform their lives.

The people had pride.

- It wasn't until Paul mentioned the gospel preached to Gentiles that the crowd went nuts (Acts 22:21-23). They couldn't fathom that Gentiles could also become children of God and part of the Messiah's kingdom. They failed to consider the possibility that they had overlooked numerous passages that predicted the salvation of Gentiles.
- We also can encounter people who approach the Bible with preconceived ideas and prejudices and are unwilling to reexamine their long-held beliefs.

What can we learn?

- Evangelism is not easy. Spreading God's word has ever and will ever be an easy task for God's people (Matthew 7:13-14).
- We need to know when to move on (Matthew 7:6). It is foolish to continue sharing God's word with those with hard hearts.
- We need to avoid taking rejection personally. Our job is simply to plant the seed (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Conclusion:

Are there any barriers standing between you and the Lord?

- Shawn Jeffries