

The Mission of the Gospel

Acts 26:1-23

Two years after Paul had been on trial before Felix, he is now going to be tried before King Agrippa, the Jewish King. In his defence, Paul tells how he went from persecuting the Christian faith to believing it and defending it. More than that, he also tells us what really drove him in his life and ministry. While Paul's story is unique for Paul, we're going to see why it also matters for us.

The Call

Paul starts his talk about how he had met the risen Christ on the way to Damascus. He explains how Jesus had called him to be a witness to everything he had and would experience of Christ. This calling was specifically from Christ to Paul, but like Paul, all of us are called to bear witness to what we have experienced of Christ.

As most Christians know, telling others about Jesus is not always easy. We struggle with personal embarrassment, feeling like we don't have the answers, not wanting to impose our faith on them, and so on. So how are we supposed to do it?

First of all it's a matter of obedience to Jesus and the Great Commission he has given us. Secondly, we need to remember that even though we are, and feel, totally inadequate for the job, God gives us everything we need if we step out in obedience. Thirdly, having realised this is a matter of obedience and looking to God in faith for help, we have got to step out and do it. How are we going to do that then?

It could be by simply letting your friend or colleague know that you, a reasonable and normal person, went to church at the weekend. It could also be just by being a good friend to someone, listening and talking if they are going through struggles in life. Perhaps just letting them know that you'll pray for them. It could also be by being genuinely interested in other people, asking them about what they believe without having to tell them what you yourself believe, before discussing faith and the gospel in more detail.

The Cost

No matter however sensitive we are, and however much we are motivated by love rather than anything else, the truth is that the message of Jesus is offensive and there will almost certainly be a price to pay.

We can expect that as we are obedient to the call to spread the good news there will be a cost, we will meet opposition. And yet, the remarkable thing is that God even uses that opposition for his own purposes. So the very opposition that we face, even the mild stuff, as we respond to it with love and boldness and the gospel, becomes a way to further witness to Jesus.

The Purpose

Jesus tells Paul that his witnessing to Jesus would result in several amazing things. First, that people would have their eyes opened to the truth and beauty of Jesus. People who have been living in spiritual blindness all their lives, will come to see for the first time. Second, that people would be turning from the oppressive power of Satan to God. Satan's deceptions and darkness will be exposed and conquered by the light. Third, that people would receive forgiveness and a place among God's people. People will receive the gift of God's grace and come to find a wonderful place to belong, among God's own people.

Knowing these incredible truths should fill us with boldness and excitement in our witnessing.