

Put Forth to Testify

Acts 21:15-40

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Introduction:

In Acts we have seen how the kingdom of Jesus Christ advanced upon the world in the first century.

- It was advancing with power upon Jerusalem and upon the Roman Empire.
 - And the LORD was using His servant Paul to lead the way in this advance.
- Last time, in the beginning of chapter 21,
 - we saw how the faithful Apostle was going to Jerusalem despite prophecies which told of danger that awaited him there;
 - and despite the protests of those who cared for his safety.
- He knew that he had work to do for the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem and then in Rome, and he was prepared to face whatever hardship might come his way.
 - This was no empty boast, as we will see—it was a sincere attestation.
 - As we follow him into Jerusalem today, we see how the LORD puts forth this faithful servant to speak in Jerusalem the message that needs to be heard.
 - We need to see the faithful hand of God who also *puts us forth* to testify for Him wherever we are.
 - Some of you have spouses—you have many opportunities to testify to each other of Jesus and His kingdom...
 - You husbands are not only to lead your household in family worship, but also to testify of the goodness of God and to promote His ways in your home.
 - Some of you have children—you are not to hide from them the glory of the Lord Jesus and what He has done—
 - You are to command your children in the way of the Lord that the Lord may bring to you all that He has spoken.
 - And as you are out in the neighbourhood or visiting your relatives or in the work place...
 - It is your privilege to testify of the Lord Jesus and of His advancing kingdom.
 - I read of a truck driver who visits hospitals as he goes from place to place.
 - He often opens the conversation with these words:
 - “My reason for visiting you is to let you know about the love of Jesus, that there is nothing better in the whole world than knowing Him.”
 - In one instance, five members of a family were brought to Christ through reading a Bible he left with a dying young man.
 - You all need to make the most of every opportunity!
 - Jesus’ kingdom is advancing in the world and we are called to promote it.
 - In our text today, you can see how Paul endeavours to advance the kingdom at Jerusalem, even to those who had just abused and afflicted him.
 - Listen now as I read to you from our text—Acts 21:15-40:

Acts 21:15-40: And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.

And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following *day* Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had

done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, “You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave *their* heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written *and* decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.” Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all *men* everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and

has defiled this holy place.” (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, “Away with him!” Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, “May I speak to you?” He replied, “Can you speak Greek? Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?” But Paul said, “I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people.” So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to *them* in the Hebrew language, saying,

May the Lord bless to us the hearing of His holy and infallible Word.

The hostility that is exhibited in this passage by the Jews who oppose the gospel is quite striking...

- especially as it stands out in such sharp contrast to the pursuit of peace that is exhibited by the church of Jesus Christ in verses 15-26!
 - It makes me think of Psalm 120 where David says,
 - **Psalm 120:7: “I am for peace but...they are for war.”**
- Let’s begin with a look at how:

I. As the servants of the Lord, we are to pursue peace with all men.

- This is a direct command in Hebrews 13, and it is buttressed by a warning:
 - **Heb 12:14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord**
 - Likewise, in Romans 12:18, Paul says to the Roman believers:
 - **Ro 12:18: If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**
 - We can learn much about this from the good example of the church in our text.
- A. First, we can learn from their example how we are to love one another.
- The peace that we pursue with all must begin in the church.
 - If you are not for peace in the house of God, you are not really for peace with those outside either.
 - Look at the example of the church in Acts...

- A.1. Last week we saw how the brothers at Caesarea who opposed Paul's visit to Jerusalem, once they saw that he was fully resolved to go for the Lord,
- not only stopped trying to dissuade him, but also accompanied him to Jerusalem and arranged lodging for him there at the home of a brother.
 - This itself is a great example in that they did not hold on to their opinion so as not to assist their brother and even to expose themselves to danger by their association with him.
- A.2. And then look at how the church at Jerusalem was also for peace...
- In verse 17, Luke reports that the brethren at Jerusalem: **received us gladly**.
 - Remember that there had been some tensions in the past—about how to treat the Gentiles.
 - The church had come to an agreement at the Jerusalem Council, but there had still been some tensions after that...
 - In Galatians, Paul speaks of how he had to rebuke some of the brothers from Jerusalem including Peter for refusing to eat with the Gentiles.
 - It is easy to let such encounters fester, even after they are over, and then to let resentment develop unless you fight against it...
 - We see nothing of the kind with the brethren at Jerusalem!
 - They received Paul and his companions gladly!
- A.3. This unity and good will is further exhibited in by the rejoicing of the Presbytery when they here of the success in Paul's ministry.
- Luke tells us in verse 18-19 that when Paul went in to James,
 - he called the whole Presbytery together to meet with him—all the elders at Jerusalem!
 - And he says that they glorified God when they heard about all the Gentiles who had come to faith!
 - Too often when we hear of how God is using someone in His work—perhaps even more than He is using us...
 - It is easy for resentment to develop rather than praise.
 - I do not need to tell you how wrong this is—it is so obvious that it is very shameful to have such an attitude.
 - But you know how easy it is for it to rise in your heart.
 - When you see someone who is training up their children in faithfulness when you are not,
 - instead of rejoicing in the way God is using them and going to them for advice, it is easy to criticize them instead.
 - Such envy is so common that a whole variety of examples could be mentioned... in all areas of life.
 - Envy is a major cause of division in many churches.
 - Let us give glory to God when we hear of His work instead of criticizing His servants.

TRANS> Let us learn from these brothers in our text how to pursue peace by loving one another when differences, resentment, and envy might cause us to do otherwise.

- It is just as wrong for us to neglect the pursuit of peace as the pursuit of purity.
 - And now see secondly how the example of these brothers teaches us...

B. We are to devise ways to lessen and remove offenses that disrupt our unity in every way we can.

B.1. The elders at Jerusalem do not hesitate to tell Paul that there is rumour afoot about him...

- namely, that (as verse 21 says),
 - many of the believers in their congregations have been informed that Paul has been teaching:

- **Acts 21:21: “all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.”**

B.1.a. They explain that this is particularly offensive to many of the great myriads at Jerusalem who believe the gospel because they are very zealous for the law.

- Notice that the elders do not say “**we** are zealous for the law,” but “**they** are all zealous for the law.”
- In other words, as mature believers, they understood that the law of ceremonies that Moses had instituted was only provisional until Jesus came.
 - They were not zealous for the law in that way, but the people they shepherded were...
 - And in part, this was a virtuous thing because as soon as they came to understand what God had done through Jesus,
 - they were all the more zealous in their service to God...
 - And the service they knew was the service under the Old Covenant.
 - The Lord was very patient with young believers about this and gave them time to work it out.
- But the rumour they had heard about Paul was also not true.
 - It was a false report that Paul commanded the Jews to forsake Moses...
 - He did no such thing!
 - In fact, he even had Timothy get circumcised as an adult because he was born of Jewish mother and had not been circumcised.
 - He did this so as not to offend the Jews.
 - Yet, there was some truth in the charge because Paul did indeed teach that circumcision and the keeping of the ceremonial law was not binding on anyone now that Christ had come.
 - And he, and many of the Jews under his ministry, were enjoying this liberty!
 - They were sitting down to pork chops and ham with their Gentile brothers!
 - But Paul did not command any Jew to do this.
 - He rather told them not to violate their consciences in this matter.
 - And of course he absolutely forbade anyone to try to impose the Old Testament ordinances on the Gentiles!
 - On that, he was absolutely inflexible!

➤ The elders at Jerusalem affirm that the ordinances of the law are not to be imposed on the Gentiles (in verse 25).

- But they make their concern very clear...

B.1.b. The rumour about Paul must be dispelled or it will disrupt the peace and unity of the church at Jerusalem.

- As they themselves do not believe the rumour, they give counsel to Paul about how he might dispel it.
 - Their counsel can be seen in verse 23-24:
 - **Acts 21:23-24: Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.**
 - We don't need to dwell on the details of the custom...

- In short, these four men had taken a Nazirite vow which was a month long process of consecration that was concluded by a week-long ritual of purification.
- Paul, having been in Gentile lands, would be expected to undergo a week long purification himself,
 - so the elders are suggesting that he should do this with these four men to show that he is not opposed to Jews observing the law...
 - In fact, they go a little far in saying “that you yourself walk orderly and keep the law.”
 - Paul did keep the law when he was with Jews so as not to offend them—but he lived as a Gentile when he was among them.
 - You can suppose that when he was in mixed company, he went with the Gentiles—
 - because any Jew who was willing to be in the company of Gentiles was already taking a huge step in the direction of liberty...
- While the counsel given by the Presbytery can be called into question,

B.2. Two things are quite commendable here in the way they pursue peace!

B.2.a. First of all, that the elders at Jerusalem did not believe the rumour that was being spread about Paul!

- Many of the people under their care did, but they show that they were mature men because they did not believe it!
- My brothers and sisters, believing rumours about others is one of the greatest sources of division in the church today!
 - Even when someone is quoted, check out the context of quote before you accept it!
 - So much division is caused by a readiness to receive false reports.
 - Remember, the Bible says that it is an abomination to the Lord to sow discord among the brethren...
 - Think about that!
 - Idolatry and sodomy are an abomination to Him, but so is sowing discord!
- Refusing to believe a rumour is the first commendable thing pertaining to the pursuit of peace by the presbytery at Jerusalem...

B.2.b. But secondly, it is commendable that they have searched out a way to potentially lessen the offense that will be caused by Paul’s coming.

- Even if their method can be questioned—the very fact that they do what they can to promote and maintain peace is instructive to us.
 - They saw the potential threat to peace and they labour to preserve the peace.
- The servant of the Lord is not to strive...
 - He is not to be provocative simply for the sake of being provocative.
 - Now I would add that there are times when faithfulness does call us to be provocative—
 - We only need to think of Jesus eating without washing his hands in the traditional way...
 - He did it to make a point that these traditions were not hindering true piety.
 - He did the same by healing people on the Sabbath—again, violating their traditions, but not God’s law.
- But you know what I am talking about here...

- Some men enjoy stirring up controversy and they never look for ways to promote peace.
 - You should never do what is unlawful for the sake peace, but you should do all that you can.
- For example, the elders here do not believe it is lawful to sing uninspired songs in public worship,
 - but as it is no violation to sing them outside of the public assembly, we sing them before the service begins.
 - It is a way that we can promote peace.
- If you are in a situation where someone thinks you are against him—perhaps for wrongs he has done...
 - It is easy for you to devise ways to promote peace—you can do something for that brother...
 - I have seen brothers won back by that method!
 - The point is—look for ways to promote peace!

➤ And now let's look at Paul's example...

- He also teaches us about pursuing peace...

C. From his example, we learn that we are to submit to one another and be willing to go out of our way in our efforts to promote peace.

C.1. You see that Paul immediately and unquestionably submits to his brethren...

- Look at verse 26:
 - **Acts 21:26: Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.**
 - He springs right into action the very next day!

C.1.a. He is not too proud to submit to the counsel of the elders...

- Some men, just because it was not their idea, are unwilling to listen to others.
- If Paul had refused the elders in this, it would have caused hard feelings between them.
 - We don't know whether he thought it was the greatest idea, but he was willing to go along with it.
- It is wrong to charge him with being inflexible—
 - He is very flexible in every way that he can be, but when principle is at stake—then he absolutely refuses to yield.

➤ Note also that...

C.1.b. He is not too proud to inconvenience himself in order to dispel a false rumour.

- If you can do something to help quell a rumour that is causing division, why not do it?
 - Don't be so proud as to say, "It's just a rumour—why should I have to prove myself to them?"
 - You should do it for the peace of the church that Jesus shed His blood for!

C.2. Understand that it takes effort and sacrifice to maintain peace...

- That is why the Bible says that we are to *pursue* peace.
 - It does not come by sitting around idly—you have work hard at it!
- Just think what Jesus had to do in order to make peace between us and God.

- If peace is that important to Him, should it not be important to us?
- Are you willing to go out of your way for the sake of peace?

TRANS> So you see that pursuing peace with all men begins with pursuing peace in the church.

- But when you do, you must leave the matter in God's hands.
- This is the second thing I want you to learn from our text...

II. Learn here that you must leave the outcome with God.

A. Sometimes, you can feel entitled to success...

A.1. You have gone to great lengths to maintain peace—

- but then instead of obtaining peace, you get even worse division.
- Of course this is discouraging—
 - In one way, it ought to be discouraging—because peace is something that we are to truly desire.
 - There are some men who are perverted in that they come to enjoy war and controversy—they thrive upon it...
 - But a true man of God will rise with valour to fight the good fight of faith and stand against every enemy with courage...
 - but he is not for war but for peace—he fights for peace.
 - This is something that pacifists cannot understand.
 - How can a person who loves peace fight?
 - But it only makes sense...
 - If you love your village and want its peace, you rise up to fight when invaders come—not because you love war but because you love peace.

TRANS> But you must not be discouraged if peace does not come.

A.2. Paul did not obtain peace, but war when he followed the Presbytery's advice.

A.2.a. Verse 27 tells us that the opposition was instigated by the Jews from Asia (where Ephesus was) who had come up to Jerusalem to worship.

- These are the ones who had plotted to kill Paul when he was there.
 - He had been protected by the civil magistrate there—but perhaps they hope to obtain greater success in Jerusalem.
 - It seems that the very sight of him at the temple incites them!
 - How dare he pretend to worship God in this place!

A.2.b. But wait just a minute—maybe the plan for peace was more successful than it appears...

- It is true, as we will see in just a moment, that Paul personally got the opposite of peace with the unbelieving Jews from Asia and Jerusalem...
 - But the elders were aiming especially to preserve peace in the church at Jerusalem.
 - And there is no mention of any division over Paul among the believers!
 - You can even imagine that when the believers saw how unjustly Paul was treated, it helped to dispel the rumours about him.

TRANS> But however that may be, Paul did not get to enjoy peace with the unbelieving Jews!

A.2.c. The Jews from Asia are not only content to charge Paul with the crimes that Stephen had been charged with when he was martyred,

- But they also promote a lie about the great apostle to the Gentiles...

- Not only do they come at him as if he were against the things of God that Stephen was accused of being against:
 - **Acts 21:28: Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place;**
- But they add an additional charge that is not even true...
 - V. 28 continued... **and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)**
- Like Stephen, Paul did not preach against the people or the law or the temple—
 - He rather spoke of the glorious fulfilment of all that God had promised to the people of Israel through the law and in the ceremonies of the temple.
 - And what’s more, he had not brought Greeks into the temple—
 - He was at that very moment endeavouring to show his respect for the ancestral traditions, even though they were now abolished.

A.2.d. But you see that the result of Paul’s efforts to have peace resulted in just the opposite...

- Look at verse 30:
 - **Acts 21:30: And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.**
 - The doors were shut as if to preserve the sanctity of the temple from this profane man!
 - Verse 31 says that they were seeking to kill him.

➤ This can be very discouraging...here you are trying to make peace and you get war!

B. But consider that when war arises against you, it is from the LORD!

B.1. Remember that all things work after the counsel of His will!

- That’s right—everything that happens is a part of His plan, and if you are serving Him, you do not need to be discouraged.
- The whole affair is in the hands of your wise and gracious Lord.
 - Was that not so when 27 years before the unbelieving Jews had hauled Jesus away to be crucified?
 - Did Peter not say more than once in the sermons that are recorded for us in Acts that this was all done according to:
 - **Acts 2:23: “the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God,”?**
 - None of Jesus’ disciples could see it at the time, but afterward they understood and rejoiced in God’s purpose that had been carried out.
 - Even though Christ’s enemies meant it for evil, God meant it for God in order to save many people from their sins.
 - Should you not trust Him when your efforts to make peace bring on more war?

B.2. Consider what God’s purpose was for Paul here!

B.2.a. It was not for him to go to Jerusalem and have a quiet time there!

- He had already been told that he would be put in chains here.
 - And you see that he is...
- As I mentioned last time, you should not suppose that something has gone wrong just because there is opposition and war arises against you!

B.2.b. The Lord wanted Paul to testify for Him in Jerusalem!

B.2.b.1) And this mob violence and subsequent arrest of the Apostle gave him the opportunity to do exactly that!

- It gave him an opportunity to tell how Christ had confronted him when he had been murderously opposed to the Christian movement...
- And how Christ had pardoned him and then commissioned him to go to Gentiles with the gospel of peace.
 - We will look at what Paul said next week—
 - but today I want you to see that this opposition to Paul was the Lord's doing in order that Paul might testify!

B.2.b.2) Paul had a message that needed to be heard in Jerusalem.

- They needed to hear how God had commanded him to go to the Gentiles to preach the gospel and gather them in.
- And there was no way that Paul could have called an assembly of these ones that wanted to kill him...
 - so the Lord worked it out to have such an assembly!
- They needed to see that Jesus was God's way of peace for the whole world—both Jew and Gentile!
 - It is not in Jewish ceremonies, but through faith in Jesus that we have peace with God.

B.3. And look at how the Lord marvellously preserves Paul here!

B.3.a. It was not His will for Paul to die at this time, but to testify for Him...

- so He uses, of all things, the Romans to restrain this Jewish mob!
- It says in verse 31 that these angry Jews were bent on killing him,
 - but they can't because his time to die has not yet come!
 - No one can kill you until God's appointed time has come.
 - You are perfectly safe under His care.
 - If your great interest is to do His will, then if the time for you to die should come, what is that to you? Let it come!
 - But as long as He has some use for you here, He will preserve you from all harm—harm of any kind.

B.3.b. Look at verse 31 and following and you can see what happens!

- **Acts 21:31-36: 31 Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. 34 And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. 35 When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"**
 - The Lord was preserving His servant for His purposes.

B.3.c. Christian, do you realize that if you are alive, the only reason you are alive is to serve Jesus Christ?

- That's right!

- When you were baptized, you promised that you would deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him.
- You are not your own—you were bought with a price and you are here for Him.
- You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God!
- Are you consciously aware that that is why you are here?
 - For Paul, God’s purpose was that he might testify of the Lord to these Jews...
- Is it not also God’s will for you to testify of Jesus Christ—wherever you are?
 - Is it not His will for you to live for His kingdom, to promote His honour and glory in the world?
 - Of course it is!

TRANS> And that brings me to the third point...

III. See how earnest Paul is to testify of his Lord!

A. We have seen it all along in his life.

A.1. The gospel entirely captivated him.

- It gripped him.
 - All his life, he never got over it...
 - That God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself!
- It astounded him that God should have such love that He Himself would become the sacrifice of offering for His people...
 - Perhaps Paul’s initial rejection of the gospel was in part due to the fact that he couldn’t fathom that God Almighty would stoop so low to redeem sinful people!
 - He had to meet Christ on the Damascus Road before he could accept such an incredible message and believe that love could extend so far—
 - The Creator, crucified for the creature!

A.2. And it was his grasp of the amazing love of God that made Paul the faithful evangelist and apostle that he was.

- He says it himself—the love of Christ constrained him...
 - It made him into a mad man.
 - **2 Cor 5:13-15: For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.**
 - This is why Paul lived such an extraordinary life of commitment!
- But if you stop and consider it, Paul’s response is not extraordinary...
 - It is the only reasonable response to what God has done in Christ!
 - How could you have such a gospel and not be moved by it to the very core of your soul!
- And with a gospel that has such dramatic power to completely turn the lives of every person who embraces it around...
 - to turn them from eternal hell to eternal joyful fellowship with the living God in glory!
 - How could anyone possess such a message and not be flat out earnest to make it known to poor perishing souls!
 - Just even to tell them that God in heaven has such amazing incredible love for sinners!

- Brethren, the unreasonable thing—the insane thing—is to have such a message and **not** have Paul’s zeal...
- Don’t you think?
- It is a pity that so few even come close to what is reasonable in their service to Christ.

B. Look at how his zeal is demonstrated in our text...

B.1. Here he is—dragged out of the temple by an angry mob of Jews who are zealous to kill him...

- They were not gentle with him—they were battering him and bruising him.
- They were hurling all sorts of unfounded accusations at him such that the commander of the Roman garrison had no idea what he had done...
- In fact, he thought he was the Egyptian that had enraged the people by promising to lead them in overthrowing Rome—
 - This Egyptian had promised to make the walls of Jerusalem fall down and then to lead them into the city to oust the Romans.
 - But then when his prophecies failed, he conveniently disappeared as the Romans came to deal with the uprising and left his followers to fend for themselves...
 - Four hundred were killed, 250 or so were arrested, and the rest were dispersed.
 - Who else could be treated with such hatred?

B.2. Now you would think that between being physically wounded and morally outraged by the unjust treatment he was receiving,

- Paul would have thought of nothing else but to be taken away from this angry mob!
 - But not so! not he!
- Instead, he shocks the commander...
 - Not simply by speaking Greek and by explaining that he is a Jew who is a citizen of Tarsus,
 - but by imploring him to let him speak to the angry mob!
 - “You want to go and speak to *them*?”
 - “Are you completely mad?”
 - “These people who were accusing you and trying to kill you?”
 - “You want to talk to them?”
- I don’t know for sure if that is what the commander thought,
 - But isn’t it an extraordinary thing that Paul wanted to talk to the people that hated him so?
 - And not to give them a piece of his mind—but to explain to them how Jesus Christ had apprehended him and sent him to preach the gospel to the nations!
 - Paul saw this as a tremendous opportunity to tell the Jews at Jerusalem of the glorious gospel of Christ!
 - All he can think about is speaking to these people!

B.3. Most believers would not look at this as an opportunity.

- We don’t find many opportunities because we are not looking for them.
 - We are not motivated to speak for Christ.
 - I include myself in this indictment.
- What can we do?
 - Is it just a matter of mustering up courage?

- No, it is a matter of considering what it is to have God almighty in Christ reconciling the world to Himself...
 - It is to behold the amazing love of our God and let it truly captivate our hearts...
 - It is to see our great need for this salvation and so the need of everyone else...
- The truth of the matter is that we need to simply see things as they really are...
 - Then we too will be constrained by the love of Christ...
 - Then we too will find opportunities where we do not find them now.

Conclusion...

My brothers and sisters, Paul was put forth by the Lord to testify of His grace.

- Paul knew that to be so, and by God's grace he did testify.

You have also been put forth by the Lord to testify.

- Certainly not as an apostle, but wherever He has put you...
 - Do you so love Christ that you testify of Him to your children? to your friends and relatives? to your neighbours and co-workers?
 - You are not called to strive, but to pursue peace with all men, even with those who are for war.
 - The way forward is not to berate yourself and try harder—it is to behold the love of God in Christ so that you cannot but speak of it.