

Sermon Date: February 23, 2014
Paul's Arrest and Testimony – Acts 21:27-22:30
Doug McBride

Read Acts 21:27-22:30

Introduction and Prelude:

As a recap of what we studied from last week, the Holy Spirit has forewarned Paul (Acts 20:22-23) and his friends (Acts 21:4-14) about future sufferings to come as he continues to respond to God's call to preach the gospel. In Acts 21:12 Paul's friends are trying to persuade him not to go to Jerusalem in response to what the LORD tells them about his fate.

In light of the response of Paul's friends and their struggle to support his decision to continue to Jerusalem in light of knowing he would endure much suffering, in this week's sermon Doug drew a correlation about the difference between "empathizing" and "sympathizing." See the following definition of these two distinctive terms:

*Sympathy and empathy are separate terms with some very important distinctions. Sympathy and empathy are both acts of feeling, but with **sympathy you feel for** the person; you're sorry for them or pity them, but you don't specifically understand what they're feeling. **Empathy** can best be described as **feeling with the** person. Notice the distinction between **for** and **with**. Instead of feeling sorry for, you're sorry with and have clothed yourself in the mantle of someone else's emotional reactions.*

In this instance as Doug pointed out, the Holy Spirit gives Paul's friends a heads-up about trials to come and understandably they feel strong emotions. Out of sympathy they try to persuade him to not go, rather than empathize by entering his world without changing him nor changing what God has planned. The connection is that when we sympathize with someone's pain we try to change it thereby making it about us, i.e. – reducing our own pain, rather than empathize which, enables us to enter someone's pain without trying to shut it down. Take home lesson: don't go further than the Spirit prompts us even when He is warning us that it's about to go bad. Has there been or is there a situation in your life where you are "sympathizing" rather than "empathizing" when empathizing is all God has called on you to do?

1. What is starting to happen in Acts 21:27-31?
 - a. Based on what we have learned about Paul throughout Acts, why do you think the Jewish leaders react so strongly to Paul's presence in the Temple? (See Acts 9:20, 23; 29; 14:19; 17:5; 13; 18:12-13).

2. How threatening is this situation for Paul?

