

# Acts of the Apostles

## 46 – Exercising my Rights

### Acts 23-24

#### Exercise my right to follow Jesus into suffering

- Paul's story has the same elements as Jesus' story in Luke 22-23
  - Arrest – Trial before Jews – Trial before Romans – Injustice
  - John 15.20

#### Exercise my right to work for the unity of the church

- Paul's rationale for going to Jerusalem in the first place is to deliver the offering of the Gentiles so that the unity in the church is maintained
  - Paul had fought some battles for the unity of the Gentile / Jew church: Acts 15, Galatians 2, Romans
- Why is this so important?
  - It is critical to the witness of the church (John 17.21, 23)
    - The world can find division anywhere – racial, economic, social, etc.
  - It is contained in the work of Jesus (Ephesians 2.14-16)
    - To destroy unity (through apathy or anger) is to deny the power of the Gospel to make us into "one new man"

#### Exercise my right to live in an unjust world

- See it
- Stand up to it
- Speak up against it
- Suffer well under it
  - Not unnecessarily – Paul is no sadist
- Paul asserts his individual rights but does so with a view to the common good and in submission to God
  - Our temptation: change the culture, then the Kingdom comes
  - Biblical truth: the Kingdom comes (in us!), then the culture changes

#### Exercise my right to bear witness to the work of Jesus

- Our story doesn't change with our circumstances
- Our story doesn't change with others' responses or desires

Questions for Discussion:

1. Paul's life (and ministry) was marked by a pattern: service to others, speaking of Jesus, then a riot. If you could identify a pattern in your life with God, what would it be? (if there's a riot involved, please be sure and let your small group know so they can be ready!)
2. Read John 15.18-20. When Jesus speaks like this, what is your first reaction? What do you fear in what He says? What do you find to be true in these words (based on your experience)?
3. In the sermon, we identified two reasons working for the unity of the church is important. Where have you seen *disunity* in the church? How did it affect you? How did it affect the church? Where have you seen a church act in unity? What were the results (in you and in the surrounding area)?
4. Reread Acts 24.14-16. What is Paul's argument about the story God is telling in the world? Based on this, read Ephesians 2.14-17. Can you put into your own words what Paul is trying to teach the Ephesians (and us!)?
5. Because we live in an unjust world, we will experience that injustice at times. In the sermon, we stated that the temptation is to try to change the culture so that it's ready for the Kingdom. The way the Bible states it is the exact opposite: we are so committed to the Kingdom that the culture can't help but change. Where do you see examples of people falling into the temptation mentioned? Where do you see examples of people living in the biblical pattern? Where do you see either in you personally?
6. In this section of Acts, we're focusing on the story that God is telling through Paul. Who is one person you're praying for that needs to hear the story that God is telling through you? What is one door that God might open to use you in ministry to them?