
DAY 6 • AUGUST 10

Unashamed of God in Persecution**READ: ACTS 17: 1-15; PHILIPPIANS 3:8**

²And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." ⁴And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. ⁵But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

ACTS 17:2-5**REFLECT**

Just before this episode, Paul and Silas had escaped from prison because of a great earthquake that broke open the doors. After paying a visit to their friend, Lydia, they departed to go towards Thessalonica where they preached the gospel in the synagogues (Acts 16:40-17:1).

Some of the Greeks and women came to believe in the gospel, while the Jews there grew more and more jealous. Soon an angry mob had formed and caused chaos in the city, threatening another Christian, Jason, and his household, who showed hospitality to Paul and Silas.

Despite the open hostility they experienced in Thessalonica, Paul and his company did not stop preaching the gospel. They moved to Berea, where they preached in another Jewish synagogue. The gospel was well received by the people there, but the peace did not last long. The angry Jewish mob from Thessalonica had followed them there to wreak havoc, and the disciples had to move again to another place. And while Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy in Athens, he wasted no time and took the opportunity to preach the gospel there.

In Acts 17, Paul and his fellow apostles experienced two consecutive episodes of persecution that caused chaos in the towns they preached in. What was interesting was their response—they pressed on in preaching the gospel from town to town. If the gospel was well received in a particular town, they would stay there a little longer and continue preaching. If they experienced hostility and persecution, they would move on to the next town and preach there. No amount of persecution could stop them from preaching the gospel, and they were quick to move on.

Have you ever been bullied, made fun of, or rejected by others because of your faith? Paul is one character in the Bible who has experienced persecution on all different levels—from being pursued by angry mobs, to being tried by the Roman court, to being thrown in prison. Despite this, he pressed on in declaring his faith.

What is most interesting about this is Paul's own salvation story. Before encountering Christ, he had all the qualities of someone who was destined to live a respectable and comfortable life in those days (Philippians 3:4-6). In choosing to live a life devoted to Jesus and the spread of His gospel, he, in the world's eyes, lost everything. Yet, in Philippians 3:8, Paul wrote that he counted every loss he encountered as nothing in comparison with what he gained by knowing Christ.

In light of eternity, we come to know Christ as our greatest gain. When we encounter persecution of all kinds, may we draw our strength from the promise of God that whoever is unashamed of Him in this life, He will be unashamed of when He comes in the last days (Luke 9:26).

RESPOND

1. How open are you about your faith to others? List down three ways you can better live a life of integrity and non-compromise, starting this week.
2. How do you respond when people persecute you? Based on the story of Paul, how do you think you should respond?
3. What situations and places in your life do you need to be more open about your faith in? Focus on being a witness of God in that area in the coming months.

PRAY

1. Pray for the courage to live according to your life in Christ.
2. Pray for more opportunities to show others God's love through your presence in their lives.