

“DO WHAT IS RIGHT BUT BE PREPARED”  
Deuteronomy 6:13-19, Luke 21:12-19, Acts 21:27-36  
July 26 & 27, 2025

“A young preacher was preaching on a street corner in Atlanta. There was quite a bit of activity in the same area among Muslim people. While the young preacher delivered his message, a young guy of the Nation of Islam became very upset. He threatened the young preacher and told him that if he didn’t stop sharing his message that he would regret it, and he reached in his pocket.

“This presented a crisis moment for the young preacher because he had to make a decision. Was he going to stop preaching at the possibility of losing his life or was he going to take the risk? He spoke to the Lord, quietly within his soul, and said, ‘Lord, if this is it, then I entrust my eternal destiny to You.’ Then the preacher kept on preaching.

“There are times in our lives where we should take risks for God. When is the last time you’ve taken a risk for God?”<sup>1</sup>

God has invited us to be His witnesses in all the world. In fact, Jesus gave us those directions in His Great Commission, “*Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28:19-20). It’s a risk that Jesus wants us to take for Him so that everyone in the world hears about His sacrifice for them on behalf of their sins. Jesus died, paying the price for our sin, so that we could live through Him in eternal life. And then He rose again from the dead to give us the assurance we need to take the risk in telling everyone else about Him.

But before we take the risk of sharing Jesus Christ with others, it is vital that we prepare ourselves for it, knowing full well what the costs are involved in doing the work of the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 257, #777)

Moses had told the people of Israel what they needed to do to please God as they prepared to go into the Promised Land to inherit it. In our Old Testament lesson of Deuteronomy 6 today we heard his words, *“Fear the Lord your God, serve Him only and take your oaths in His Name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God...Do what is right and good in the Lord’s sight, so that it may go well with you...”* (6:13-15, 18).

Do what is right and it will go well with you! Those are good words for us even today. We are to serve the Lord and be willing to risk being His witness wherever we go so that others might hear His Good News, and then they might come to faith in Jesus, too.

But realize that even if we do what is right, the world will want either to exploit it or demonize us for it. If we do what is right, there are those who will try to take advantage of our good works and our love for them, in order to get what they can from us for as long as they can. One thing will lead to another and pretty soon we find ourselves over our heads in so much that we have to break off that relationship, because they are not interested in hearing about Jesus, only what they can get from us.

And then, if we do what is right, it might come as an offense to some because they will not accept our testimony, nor will they believe what we have to say about the Lord Jesus Christ. They might even threaten us, as in our opening account; or worse, they might actually attack us and try to kill us. However, this should not surprise us, since Jesus tells us about it in our Gospel lesson of Luke 21:12-19. Jesus says clearly, *“Everyone will hate you because of Me. But not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm, and you will win life”* (Luke 21:17-19).

We are called to do the right thing in the midst of our lives - to live for Jesus and boldly share Him with others - but we are to be prepared for the adverse reactions that may come to us.

Don't go into God's service unprepared and naive about how the world will respond to us. Do the right thing in service to the Lord, but expect the possible repercussions. If repercussions don't happen, you have already won the victory. But if they do happen, be ready to give a defense of the hope that is within you, yet with gentleness and love (I Peter 3:15).

The next section of our study of the Book of Acts helps us to see that Paul did that very thing - he did what was right, but prepared for any possible reaction. He had returned to Jerusalem, had met with the elders of the Jerusalem Christian Church, and agreed upon going through the purification rites and paying the expenses of four other men who had taken vows of a Nazarite. Everything was proceeding well, until he made his second visit to the Temple, completing his purification and setting up the sacrificial rites.

Listen to what took place at the Temple. This is Acts 21:27-36. (READ Acts 21:27-36)

Paul was doing what was right, following the guidance and direction of the elders of the church, and preparing to finish the purification rituals outlined by the Laws of Moses. He was honoring the Jewish traditions at the Temple, ready to let everyone know that he was not trying to eliminate the laws, but rather following them in order to be heard more clearly and readily.

However, (and so many times there is a however) there were some Jews at the Temple from the province of Asia, possibly from Ephesus, who recognized Paul and began to accuse him of turning people against the Jewish laws by advocating the following of Jesus as the Messiah. They obviously did not know he was going through the purification rites, or that he was sponsoring the four men completing their vows of the Nazarite. They didn't bother to check things out with the local Pharisees or the Chief Priest to see if everything was ok with Paul being at the Temple. Instead, they just started a riot and let accusations fly that were completely untrue. And the people who were at the temple preparing for the feast of Pentecost, heard the

unfounded accusations, believed them and then acted in a way that was to get rid of the perpetrator. All it took to get them fired up was a few lies from the heart of Satan, and they were ready to commit murder.

But Paul hadn't been trying to turn people away from the Jewish faith. He was working to help them to see how God had fulfilled His promise of a Messiah. And because they had seen Paul with Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they obviously recognized, too, they accused Paul of taking Trophimus into the temple. That was strictly forbidden by Jewish Law, so these Jews tried to make the connection that Paul was going beyond the law and bringing a foreigner into the Temple space. And, they were assuming that Trophimus was not a Jew.

You see, "the central and highest part of the temple area consisted of buildings and open courts which only Jews could enter. Surrounding these was a large colonnaded terrace which was open to all. Round the inner part ran a balustrade, on which were fixed prominent notices in red letters forbidding entry to all Gentiles on pain of death. The rumor that Paul had deliberately introduced a Gentile past this barrier was the immediate cause of the disturbance. Such an act would have been regarded as outrageous."<sup>2</sup> But there was no proof. Trophimus wasn't there.

But it's no wonder that everyone, upon hearing that "a Gentile was in the Temple," would have come running in order to protect the Temple from defilement. And upon hearing that Paul was the one who "was the perpetrator," AND was the one who was "teaching Jews to disregard the Law," they would naturally have believed the outrageous lies, and erred on the side of getting rid of the culprit. Even though none of it was true, the rest of the people in the Temple took it as absolute fact, and reacted with violence against Paul to the point that the Roman guards were necessary to rescue him.

"The crowds which thronged this temple area, particularly at festival seasons, often gave

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<sup>2</sup> (A. E. Harvey, *The Companion to the New Testament*, [Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1979] pg. 485)

rise to riots. For this reason, the main Roman garrison in Jerusalem (consisting of a cohort of about a thousand men) was stationed in the Antonia fortress, which had been built by Herod the Great in a commanding position at the north-west corner of the Temple area, with its own flight of steps leading down into the colonnaded terrace. A force of soldiers was always on duty there to cope with public disorders. Luke's description of the riot fits these arrangements at every point."<sup>3</sup> The chaos on the Temple mount, with folks yelling and screaming, and pouring into the Temple area, would have been enough to discharge the Roman guard into the Temple in order to quell the disturbance quickly.

The problem was that the commander couldn't get a consistent answer to the questions about who it was that they proclaimed Paul to be. *"Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks"* where they could at least hear themselves think (Acts 21:34).

And the next problem was to actually get Paul up into the barracks. Everyone was screaming and yelling out murderous threats, and actually wanting to get at Paul to do him bodily harm, so the soldiers had to literally carry Paul up the steps into the Antonia Fortress.

Now, it doesn't take us too long to see the results of lies and confusion in what they can do in creating a riot. The riots that took place in 2020 were founded upon various information and statements, not all of which were true. The protests during the day seemed to be peaceful, but as soon as nighttime came along, all hell broke loose. They became an all-out war against the police, ranging all over the United States, causing between \$1-2 billions of dollars' worth of damage, killing or injuring hundreds of protestors and police like, involving the National Guard and other "militia groups," and never brought about any truly positive results. Hundreds were

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<sup>3</sup> (A.E. Harvey, *Companion of the New Testament*, pg. 485)

arrested for arson, bodily injury, theft and destruction of public and private property. All of the riots were a mess, fueled by hatred, conspiracy, racism, and bias. They were an outright rebellion against the laws of the land. The militia groups were seeking to protect businesses and private property, but often it only aggravated the situation.

So, likewise, Paul was overwhelmed by the rioters in the Temple area, and it took the Roman soldiers presence and force to take him to safety. However, Paul was willing to take the risk in order to do the right thing. He had already been the focus of attention in other riots, and on one occasion had been stoned to an inch of his life. He knew the possible repercussions of sharing Jesus Christ with the Jews and Gentiles, but saving the life of one person for eternity was worth the possible riot that might occur. Paul's love for all the people, especially his own Jewish brothers and sisters, inspired him to do the right thing and to tell them about the great things that God had done to fulfill the Law and the Prophets through the giving of His Son, Jesus.

But let me ask you this. "What kind of fireman would I be if I didn't warn you about fire? What kind of policeman would I be if I didn't warn you about criminals? What kind of doctor would I be if I didn't tell you about disease? What kind of pastor would I be if I didn't warn people about hell?" What kind of Christian would I be if I didn't share the love of Jesus with those around me? "I would rather love folks into heaven, but if I have to scare them there, that will work too.

"What would you say about a fireman who saw your house burning down and who simply said, 'It'll burn itself out in a little while'? What would you say about a policeman who saw juveniles vandalizing your property and simply said, 'Well, you know, boys will be boys'? What would you say about a doctor who, when telling you that you had cancer, simply said, 'Take two aspirin and rest'?

“You would probably say they are not taking their jobs seriously. And I would not be taking my job seriously if I did not tell people about the place called hell.”<sup>4</sup> And when we do not follow Jesus’ call to take His Word to the whole world so that others might be saved by Him from their sins, we are not taking our positions as God’s servants and Jesus’ disciples seriously. Being followers of Jesus comes with the understanding that we continue His work of bringing Salvation to the world as we tell others about Him and the work that He has done to guarantee a place for us in The Father’s house. And that comes even if we are to face possible repercussions to our faithfulness in sharing the Gospel. We must do what is right, face the world and all of their possible reactions, and share what Jesus has done in our own lives to bring us salvation.

Unfortunately, “the reason why we don’t do more evangelism is that we’ve lost our concern for the lost. Most people are not concerned that they are lost [because they don’t understand the consequences of their being lost]. They’re like the little boy at Disneyland who was enjoying Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. He was enjoying the Ferris wheel and the roller coasters. He was having a marvelous time and in the midst of the crowd got separated from his parents. When he got separated from his parents, he didn’t know that he was lost because he was having so much fun on the rides.

“Satan has so constructed this world’s order to give you enough distractions so that you don’t know you’ve gotten lost in your spiritual Disneyland. We’ve got a world full of people who don’t know that the fun in this world and all this world is offering them - the cell phones, the social media, the movies, the parties, the clubs, the social relationships, the money, the job - are all a satanic camouflage to keep them from realizing that they have been separated from God the Father. Mankind spends so much time having fun that they don’t know that they are lost.

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<sup>4</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustration*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 93-94, #262)

“However, the parents of this particular child were looking for him. They knew he was lost at Disneyland. They went to an officer and told security that they couldn’t find their child. The security man led the parents to the lost child, who didn’t even know he was lost.

“God wants to find lost people. We are the security guards to bring lost people into contact with the God who wants to regain fellowship with them. That’s our task in evangelism. We are the ones God has chosen to deliver the message”<sup>5</sup> of Jesus to them so that they can become found and find eternal life. The real question is, however, “will we love them enough to help them find the Lord Jesus Christ?” Or are we so involved with everything else that we miss giving others the opportunity to find eternal life?

We need to do the right thing and live for Jesus in every aspect of our lives, regardless of what might come up against us. However, we must be prepared with our own testimony of faith in Jesus so that we can share it with others, so that they can hear about His great love for us. We need to be ready for anything, at any time, in whatever way it comes to us, so that we don’t lose the opportunity to give others hope through faith in Jesus. Let’s pray...

Father, thank You for Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ! Thank You for Your call in our lives to believe in Him, and receive Him, and then let Him live in us and through us so that those around us might hear the Good News of His Salvation. Prepare our hearts, our minds, and our souls so that we might use all our strength and time living for Jesus. Enable within us the courage to do the right thing and love others as we love ourselves. We pray this in Jesus’ great and powerful Name. Amen.

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<sup>5</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, pg. 93, #260)