

# UNSTOPPABLE CHURCH

Then and Now  
in 30 Minutes



## Episode 36 - Emboldened

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## THE SETTING

We're back in **Jerusalem**, to where Paul continued his journey at the end of his third mission trip and where he was arrested. We've come to the **Kotel ("the Wall")** - or what we often call the Western Wall. Remember, this wasn't part of the Temple itself but rather part of the retaining wall that Herod the Great built to house the huge platform on which the Temple itself stood. (For more about this, see the notes for episode 5.) Because recordings aren't allowed up on the platform area (which is now a Muslim mosque and shrine) this is the nearest we can get to where Paul was arrested.

Back in Acts 1:8 Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit would empower his followers to be his witnesses; and Paul was about to experience the reality of that empowering and emboldening once again.



The Western Wall and Plaza at night



The model of the Jerusalem Temple at the Israel Museum showing how the Fortress of Antonia (top right) dominated the Temple precincts



[Acts 21:17-22:29](#)



### **Responsibility**

Paul never had any sense of being the lone action man in the Church; rather, he always had a huge sense of responsibility and accountability for all that he did, as we see here. For the very first thing he did on arriving in Jerusalem was to go and see James, leader of the Jerusalem church, and his fellow-elders to report on all that God had done on their mission trip ([21:19](#)). Accountability still remains an important principle in all aspects of church life today.

### **Rumours**

But the rumour-mill had been working (as it sadly still does today!) Reports were circulating, the leaders told Paul, that he was telling Jewish Christians that they didn't need to keep the Jewish Law any more. Although this was far from the truth, they invited him to pay the expenses of four men who had taken a vow, which would have involved paying for their sacrifices, so that everyone would know there was no truth in the rumours - something that Paul promptly agreed to do. (By the way, the best thing we can do with rumours is not to pass them on. And the second-best thing is to act quickly to quell them.)

### **Reaction**

Paul's agreement would cost him, however. Seven days later, when they went to the Temple after the period of notice (during which they would have ritually purified themselves), he faced strong reaction: he was falsely accused by some Jews of teaching against the Law and the Temple and of bringing a Gentile into the Temple. (People will often mistake our motives and intentions!) They stirred up a riot and dragged Paul out of the Temple, intending to kill him; and he was only spared because of the intervention of a Roman commander who had spotted what was going on from the Antonia Fortress that towered over the Temple for security reasons. He was taken to the barracks where he clarified the commander's wrong impression of who he was and asked for permission to address the crowd.

## Readiness

Paul's reaction when faced with opposition was neither to fight back nor to back off; rather, he used the situation to share his testimony - an incredibly bold step in such a hostile and volatile situation. His testimony focused on three things: his life before he knew Jesus (22:1-5); his life-changing encounter with Jesus (v6-16) and his call to serve Jesus (v17-21). Whenever we share our testimony, not everyone will appreciate it, and some will even reject it, as they did here (v 22) - but that's ok!

The commander was about to have Paul flogged and questioned to get to the bottom of what was going on; but once again, Paul was ready - this time, to boldly make use of his Roman citizenship to challenge the commander's actions. There are times in life when it's right to claim our civic rights - especially when that can help the gospel.



1. How does accountability find expression in your own life?
2. Does your own experience of the Holy Spirit lead to an emboldening of you to be a witness for Jesus? If not, what do you think might be hindering this?
3. In what areas does the Church today need emboldening to become 'unstoppable Church' once again?



For a behind-the-scenes glimpse into what was involved to create this podcast series listen to Mike and David recounting their experiences!

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