

## Lesson 7

### **ST. PAUL'S POWERFUL COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

#### **The Acts of the Apostles (chapters 21-24)**

---

**Paul Going to Jerusalem:** Paul knew he would be imprisoned in Jerusalem. Although his companions pleaded with him not to go there, he knew that he had to go because God wanted him to go. No one enjoys pain but a faithful disciple wants above all else to please God. Our desire to please God should overshadow our desire to avoid hardship and suffering. When we really want to do God's will, we must accept all that comes with it—even the pain. Then we can say with Paul "Thy will be done". Paul reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

**The Jerusalem council** (Acts 15) had settled the issue of circumcision of Gentile believers. Evidently there was a rumor that Paul had gone far beyond their decision, even forbidding Jews to circumcise their children. It was not true. However, Paul willingly submitted to Jewish custom to show that he was not working against the council's decision and he was still Jewish in his life-life-style. The religious authorities were worried about Paul and so they wanted to protect him.

21:23-24 four men had made a religious vow to shave their head. It is known as Nazirite Vow. Before we speak about four men, let us talk about Nazirite vow. What is it? Numbers 6:1-8 speaks about Nazirite Vow. God instituted the Nazirite Vow for people who wanted to devote some time exclusively to serving him. This vow could be taken for as little as 30 days or as long as a lifetime. It was voluntary, with one exception- parents could take the vow for their young children, making them Nazirites for life.

**Those who took permanent vows: Samson** (Jdgs. 13:7) **Samuel** (1 Sam. 1:21) **John the Baptist** were not allowed to cut their hair. However, the temporary vow was characterized by the shaving of the head at the end of the time period. Shaving of the head and offer sacrifice at the temple

#### **The specific requirements (cf. Num. 6:1-8)**

1. Abstain from wine and strong drink; eat no product of the vine (Num. 6:3-4).
2. Do not cut one's hair.
3. Do not touch a dead person

21:23-24 Four men made a religious vow and Paul was going to participate with them in the vow. Since there was a suspicion about Paul going against Judaic practices, the council advised him to shave his head along with the four men in order to convince the Judaizers. Although Paul was a man of strong convictions, he was willing to compromise on nonessential points, becoming all things to all so that he might save some (1 Cor 9:21-23). Sometimes we see split on certain minor issues or traditions. Like Paul, we should remain firm on Christian essentials but flexible on non-essentials.

**Paul and Law:** After his conversion, Paul rejected the idea that the OT laws bring salvation to those who keep them. He accepted the view that the OT laws prepare us and teach us about the coming of Jesus Christ. Christ fulfilled the law and released us from its burden of guilt. But the law still teaches us many valuable principles and gives us guidelines for grateful living. He was not observing the laws in order to be saved. He was simply keeping the laws as custom to avoid offending those who wished to reach with the gospel (Gal 3:23-29/ Romans 3:21-31, 7:4-6, 13:9-10)

**Paul's play with Languages.** Paul spoke Greek to the Roman officials and Aramaic to the Jews. He was a cultured and educated man and not just a common rebel starting riots in the streets. Language plays a very important role in ministering to the people most effectively. 22:6 ff – after gaining a hearing and establishing common ground with his audience, Paul gave his testimony. He shared how he had come to faith in Christ. These people listened intently to Paul but the word *Gentile* brought out all their anger and expose their pride. What we understand clearly from Paul's sharing is this 'No matter how we present the message, not everyone will accept. However we must faithfully and responsibly present the gospel and leave the results to God'. The Jews were supposed to be a light to the *Gentiles* but they had renounced that mission by becoming separatist and exclusive. God's plan however would not be thwarted. The Gentiles were hearing the Good News through Jewish Christians such as Paul and Peter

Paul was born a Roman citizen whereas the commander had purchased his citizenship. When Paul asked this question, "it is legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who has not even been found guilty? The centurion stopped because by law, a Roman citizen could not punish until he had been proven guilty of a crime.

**Paul's talk before the Sanhedrin:** according to Josephus, a Jewish historian, Ananias was a profane, greedy and hot tempered man. He gave an illegal order and violated the Jewish law by pronouncing Paul as a guilty man without a trial and ordered his punishment. Sensing the difference religious groups, Paul

was very smart in creating confusions among them based on their doctrinal differences. He created a debate away from himself and towards their adversaries who were a mixture of Sadducees and Pharisees. The Jewish council was split. Although it looked like Paul's smartness in managing the crowd of adversaries, it is the Holy Spirit who guided him exactly with right words to speak powerfully. The Lord stood near Paul and said, "As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify in Rome".

Scribes	Sanhedrin	Pharisees	Sadducees
<p>The scribes were the ones who drew up legal documents. They also copied the Old Testament Scripture. They also devoted themselves to the study of the law, and the determination of its applications on daily life. They also studied the Scripture with respect to doctrinal and historical matters. Noted scribes had their own disciples. Many of the scribes were members of the Jewish council. There were some who believed in Jesus but most were opposed to Him. The Scribes were in a large part responsible for Jesus' death.</p>	<p>Sanhedrin means 'seated together'. This is the group of judges. It was made up of a council of 70 Jewish men who were directly under the high priest. They acted as the supreme court" in legal/religious trials. Some believe that this group began under the rule of King Jehoshaphat around 800 B.C. (2 Chr 19:4-11). Since Israel was subject to the Romans in Jesus' day the Sanhedrin ruled under the Romans in civil and religious matters. They were not allowed to put anyone to death. Therefore they sent Jesus to Pontius Pilate to</p>	<p>This group evolved out of a priestly group of Jewish separatists during the Maccabean revolt. The revolt began when certain Jewish priests refused to bow down to Antiochus Epiphanes, but sought to protect the right worship of God. Jesus eventually criticized some of the Pharisees for their inflexible adherence to the traditions of their fathers" rather than seeking God's Word (Mt 15:14, 23:16)</p> <p><b><u>Why did they hate Jesus?</u></b> Here are two main reasons why the religious authorities hated</p>	<p>They are members of a Jewish sect or party of the time of Jesus Christ. They denied the resurrection of the dead (Luke 20:27), the existence of spirits, and the obligation of oral tradition, emphasizing acceptance of the written Law alone. They hated the Pharisees (Luke 20:27).</p> <p>In first-century Israel, Sadducees were a religious faction that wielded societal power in nearly every aspect except military. They were supported by the Romans. They were the Jewish aristocrats of their day, known as</p>

<p>hey Were Strongly Denounced By Jesus. They were also associated with the persecutions of Peter and John and Stephen</p>	<p>have Him put to death. They acknowledged to Pilate that they had no right to execute. The Sanhedrin was abolished after the city of Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in A.D. 70. The control over the city of Jerusalem was no longer theirs.</p>	<p>Jesus so much. The first is this: they were jealous of Him. Everywhere Jesus went, He attracted huge throngs, multitudes, crowds pressing around to listen to His every word, watching His every move. He was profoundly popular among the people, whereas the rulers of the Jews laid heavy burdens on their people. The people loved Jesus, and they received Him gladly, but what they felt from the Pharisees was judgment. The second reason why they hated Him was because He exposed them. Before Jesus came, it was the Pharisees particularly, as well as the Sadducees and scribes, who set the moral standard for the community. They sat in the highest places in the synagogue. They</p>	<p>much for their wealth and corruption as for their religious devotion.</p> <p>Although we can't know for certain the origins of their name, a common belief is that it was derived from the name of prominent Old Testament High Priest, Zadok (<u>2 Samuel 15:23-29</u>; <u>1 Kings 2:35</u>).</p> <p><b>How the bible describes:</b> The Bible describes Sadducees and "chief priests"—which they were—are mentioned in all four gospels and in Acts. John the Baptist calls Sadducees a "brood of vipers" (Matthew 3:7). Jesus calls them as "wicked and adulterous generation" (Math 16:1-5) Why did Sadducees hate Jesus so much?</p> <p><b><u>Two obvious reasons apply:</u></b></p> <p>1. Jesus threatened their erroneous belief system about</p>
--	---	--	---

		were the ones who were most honored and celebrated for their virtue, but their virtue, was a pretense. It was external.	their refusal to belief in resurrection. 2.Jesus threatened their cozy relationship with Rome and the political and societal benefits that provided.
--	--	---	---

High priests	Chief priests	Elders
<p>The title “high priest” appears twenty times in the Old Testament and fifty-four times in the New Testament gospels, and in the books of Acts and Hebrews. In the New Testament the Greek word for “high priest” is archiereus. The word literally has the sense of “beginning priest.” That is, the word has the sense that the priesthood starts here (Ex 28:1)</p> <p><b>Character of the High Priest:</b> Exodus 28:1-29:46 provides more details about the establishment of the priesthood in Israel. The high priest’s garments (blue robe, ephod, breastplate and turban</p>	<p>The term chief priest never appears in the Old Testament. It is unique to the New Testament. The term “chief priest” was created by the religious leaders and is not interchangeable with high priest. The biblical scholars point out the role of the chief priests. They are specifically a group of Temple officers / The Captains of the Temple/ The Directors of the weekly course and daily course/ The Temple Overseers and the Treasurers</p> <p>They assisted the high priest and was usually the successor to the high priest.</p>	<p>The Hebrew word for elder is זָקֵן zaqen meaning "beard," and literally speaks of an older person. In the Old Testament elders were heads of households, prominent men of the tribes, and leaders or rulers in the community.</p> <p><b>New Testament Elders:</b> The Greek term, presbýteros, meaning "older" is used in the New Testament. From its earliest days, the Christian church followed the Jewish tradition of appointing spiritual authority in the church to older, more mature men of wisdom.</p> <p>In the book of Acts, the Apostle Paul appointed</p>

with “Holy to Yahweh” ungraded on a good plate) were unique and symbolized his unique position as the spiritual (Exodus 29:1-37; Leviticus 6:19-22; Zechariah 3:4-5). The breastplate symbolized righteous judgment (Exodus 28:29-30) and the Urim and Thummin were used to determine God’s will (Exodus 28:29-30). The high priest was required to be a man of exceptional holiness. If he sinned, he brought sin upon the nation of Israel (Leviticus 4:3-12).

**Function of the High Priest:**

The high priest was the mediator between God and man. Only he could enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to make atonement for the sins of the nation of Israel. He was a type of Christ. Hebrews 9:15 and 12:24 tell us that Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant (Hebrews 8:6).

**During Jesus’ time:** In the time of Christ, the high priest’s responsibility included the following: making atonement for the nation of Israel on the Day of

elders in the early church, and in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, the office of elder was instituted. The biblical requirements of an elder are described in these passages. Paul says an elder must be blameless:

In the early church, there were usually two or more elders per congregation. The elders taught and preached the doctrine of the early church, including training and appointing others.

The function of an elder was centered on taking care of the church. They were given the role of correcting people who weren't following the approved doctrine. They cared for the physical needs of their congregation as well as the spiritual needs:

"Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord." (James 5:14)

**Today’s Elders in the church:** In churches today, elders are spiritual leaders or shepherds of the church.

<p>Atonement, participating in the sacrifices when he desired, functioning as the president of the Sanhedrin Council, performing a variety of ceremonial duties, providing oversight of the temple, the priests, the levitical priests and the regulations and teaching the people (Malachi 2:1-9).</p>		<p>The elder may have the duties of a pastor and teacher. He may provide general oversight of financial, organizational, and spiritual matters. The bishops fulfill the roles of elders in the Catholic church.</p>
---	--	---

**The role of the children in 23: 16-22:** We hear of the son of Paul's sister in verse 16. This is the only reference to Paul's family. Some scholars believe that Paul's family had disowned him when he became a Christian. Paul's nephew was able to see Paul even though he was in custody because Roman prisoners were accessible to their relatives and friends who could bring them food and other amenities.

It is easy to overlook children, assuming that they are not old enough to do much for the Lord. But a young boy played an important role in protecting Paul's life. God can use anyone of any age who is willing to yield to him. Jesus made it clear that children are important (Matthew 18:2-6). We ought to give the children the importance God gives them.

23:23-24 The Roman commander ordered Paul sent to Caesarea. Jerusalem was the seat of Jewish government, but Caesarea was the Roman headquarters. God works in amazing and amusing ways. There were infinite possibility of ways God could use to get Paul to Caesarea but God chose to use the Roman army to deliver Paul from his enemies. God's ways are not our ways. Ours are limited. His are not. Let us not limit God asking him to respond to our way. When He intervenes, anything can happen, so much more and so much better that we could even anticipate.

**The Trial before Felix (Acts 24):** The accusers arrived – Ananias the high priest and Tertullus, the lawyer and several Jewish leaders. They travelled 60 miles to Caesarea, the Roman Center of Government to bring their false accusations against Paul because their murder plot (23:12-15) had failed but they persisted in trying to kill him. Tertullus was a special orator called to present the case of the religious leaders before the Roman Governor. He made

three accusations: Trouble maker and riot creator/ Ring leader of the group against the Roman/ desecrator of the temple. The religious leaders hoped that these accusations would persuade Felix to execute Paul in order to keep the peace in Palestine but Paul refuted the accusations point by point. He was able to present the gospel message through his defense and it became another opportunity to witness for Christ and Paul's accusers were unable to present specific evidence to support their general accusations. Paul's talk with Felix became so personal that Felix grew fearful like Herod Antipas (Mark 6:17-18) had taken another man's wife. When Paul spoke about his touchy areas like self-control, righteousness and judgement, he did not want to hear further. It applies to us too. We are glad to speak about the bible in general but when we hear something of which we have our opinion, and then we don't want to hear about it.