

When They Don't Hear Your Story

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Date: 15 March 2026

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Let's talk today about feeling misunderstood. Has anyone felt misunderstood before? Like you said something and the other person just received it differently.

! That your heart wasn't heard, wasn't seen. And no one likes feeling misunderstood. It hurts to be misunderstood. It doesn't feel great. Now, a few months before Jojo and I got married, I moved in first to where we're living now in Taiwei.

And we're working on buying furniture and getting the place ready for her to move in after the wedding. So one day we went mattress shopping. We went to a mattress store, went mattress shopping. And we narrowed it down to two options.

Option number one was this fancy custom mattress. You'd lie down, they'd measure your body and they'd make it custom for you. It was super comfortable. And option number two was this simple mattress.

That was, I mean, it was okay. There's nothing to write home about, but except that it was about half the price. And now I had been sleeping on the same Ikea mattress for the past six years before that.

[1:05] So I don't mind saving a buck or two. And that's when the sales lady came in. She was like, hello, can I introduce you to a mattress? Right? This, that, that nice one, that first one you were looking at, it's motion isolating.

So there's two halves still on the mattress. If one person moves a lot in the middle of the night, the other person on the other side won't feel it. And so like, wouldn't you like a good night's sleep? So I'm thinking, yeah, I do like a good night's sleep.

Like who, who doesn't? Um, but then I was like, oh, nice try. Mrs. Sales lady. You're good. You're good. I see what you're doing. Um, and that's, that's where the problem started.

Okay. So for, for those who don't know Jojo and I, um, we, we think very differently. All right. Let's just put it like that. So I'm, I'm logical. I'm an engineer by training.

So I thought to myself, okay, let's do an experiment. You're saying it's, it's motion isolating, right? So let's try it out. If it costs more, but I'll be more comfortable, like it will go for it.

[2:06] But let's, let's do an experiment and try it out. So all this is going on in my head though. This is all going on in my head. What actually came out of my mouth was, Hey, Jojo lie down over there.

And then I just jumped on the mattress. All right. Is it working, honey? Do you feel anything? Cause I'm just, I just want some data points, right? That's, that's what I'm looking for. But then to my surprise, Jojo responds, not with that calm tone.

I was expecting. Oh, actually. Yeah. It's isolating this motion. She just said, Hey man, if you want the cheaper mattress, just say it. No one, no one jumps on a bed like that. Stop being so dramatic. Why do you have to be so annoying to the sales lady?

Okay. But meanwhile, I'm thinking my science experiment. I just, I just wanted to test it. So that's, that's misunderstanding. She thought that I was being super dramatic to prove a point.

She thought that I was dismissing her thoughts and feelings about what she wanted. Meanwhile, I thought she was just dismissing my inquiry into wave propagation. But now I'm getting angry because I feel misunderstood that she won't hear my side of the story.

[3:17] Like I actually do jump in the bed that dramatically. Um, and she's getting angry because she's thinking she thinks I'm being defensive and I'm angry because she's angry. She's angry because I'm angry. We're talking louder and louder.

And there goes the next few hours of our lives. And later on, a few weeks later, we ended up buying that night sir mattress without any further testing. Um, so it's, it's fascinating to me how the biggest

fight can start from the smallest problems because of a simple misunderstanding.

Can anyone relate to that? We all want to be listened to and understood and known, and it hurts to be a misunderstood, especially by those you love. Now I bring this up because we're going through the book of acts.

And in our passage today, we see the apostle Paul misunderstood. We heard his heart for the church in acts 20 that he said, my life is of no value except to preach the gospel of the grace of Christ.

His heart is I'm willing to suffer and bring grace to you and peace from God, our father and Lord Jesus Christ, because I want you, I want to show you the joy that's yours in Christ. But we'll read today that even though that's Paul's heart for the people he reaches, they don't get it.

[4:32] They don't understand. They misunderstand his words, his heart, his story of encountering Christ. They slander him and beat him up, arrest him. And yet even in that misunderstanding, he takes that opportunity to point them to Jesus, to follow the way of Jesus, to show the grace of Jesus and preach to them the good news of Christ.

And we can learn from that ourselves when we're misunderstood, when we're not heard, that even when they don't hear our story, our side of the story, we can respond with the grace of Christ.

And yes, it does hurt. It's not easy, but let us be people that are transformed by grace and respond like Jesus and point to Jesus, even when others don't understand us or hear us out.

Or hear us out. So now I'll invite Michael and Ethan to come up. They're going to read for us from acts. Let's all stand as we read the word of God in acts together. We'll be reading from acts chapter 21, verses 17 to acts 22, verse 22.

It's a bit of a longer passage, but we'll stand together and read the word of God. Acts 21, verse 17 to 22, verse 20. Yep.

[5:41] I'll start. If you guys have the church Bible, it's page. 875. Yes. 875. Yep. If you're in the church Bible. Thanks. So chapter 21, verse 17 on acts.

Okay. So chapter 21, verse 17 on acts. Okay. So chapter 21, verse 17 on acts. Okay. Paul visits James.

Uh, when we had come to Jerusalem, uh, the brothers received us gladly on the following day, Paul went in with us to James and all the elders were present after greeting them.

He related one by one, the things that God had done among the Gentiles for his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, you see brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed.

Uh, they are all zealous for the law. And they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses. Moses, therefore are telling them to not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs.

[6:47] What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. Do therefore what we tell you. Uh, we have four men who are under a vow. Uh, take these men and purify yourself among of them and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads.

Thus all know that there is nothing, uh, in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter without judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what has been strangled and from sexual immorality.

Then Paul took the men and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each of them.

Uh, Paul arrested in the temple verse 27. Uh, when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, men of Israel help.

This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law. And this place, moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and he has defiled this holy place for they had previously seen Trophimus, the Ephesians with him in the city.

[8:04] And they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. Then all the city was stirred up and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple. And at once the gates were shut.

And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them.

And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done.

Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another. And as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd for the mob of the people followed crying out away with him.

Paul speaks to the temple people. Verse 37.

[9:29] He addressed them in the Hebrew language saying. Okay.

And I said, what shall I do, Lord?

And the Lord said to me, rise and go into Damascus. And there you'll be told all that is appointed for you to do. And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand of those who were with me and came into Damascus.

And one Ananias, a devout man, according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, come to me. And standing beside, standing by me, said to me, brother Saul, receive your sight.

And at that very hour, I received my sight and saw him. And he said, the God of our fathers has appointed you to know that he's well, to see the righteousness, to see the righteous one and to hear a voice from his mouth.

[11:54] For you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. And now, why do you wait, rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name?

When I had returned to Jerusalem, I was praying in the temple. I fell into a trance and saw him saying to me, make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.

And I said, Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another, I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. And when the blood of Stephen, your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.

And he said to me, go for, I will send you far away to the Gentiles. One more. Okay. Up to this, up to this word, they listened to him.

Then they raised their voices and said away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live. Cool. All right. Thank you. This is the word of God. Please take a seat.

[13:03] Thank you, Michael. And thank you, Ethan. They were at our newcomers lunch the past week and now, now are joining life groups. Thanks for reading for us. Let's pray. God, we just open our eyes to see the beauty of your word.

Help us to see the grace that you show us through Christ and how to extend that to others. Pray in Jesus name. Amen. So again, we're talking about misunderstanding that today, even when we're misunderstood, because that happens, there are times when we are misunderstood when they don't hear our story, despite how frustrating it is.

Let us respond in the way of Jesus. Let's show them the grace of Jesus and point people to him.

And as we read this story in Acts 21, we can see that Paul was misunderstood in a few ways.

First, they misunderstand what he says. They must misunderstand his teaching. There's a misconception floating around in Jerusalem about what Paul is teaching. And we read that in verse 21 of chapter 21.

They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to their customs. Now, this is important to the Jews because their identity as a people is based on the fact that God chose them.

[14:20] It's based on the covenant, this agreement that God gave them through Moses, the law, their identity as a people is rooted in the laws and customs of Moses. And so when we read this, in other words, there's this rumor that Paul is telling Jews, stop being Jewish to follow Christ.

It's a throw away the law of Moses and to stop being Jewish. And now that's a misunderstanding of what Paul teaches. His view is more nuanced than that. And in Romans seven, Paul agrees with the Jews.

The law is holy and righteous and good. The problem is that none of us can perfectly fulfill God's law. We can't follow all of God's commandments. We all sin. And by works of law, by our own efforts to obey, we all fall short and stand condemned.

Our only hope is that Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law on our behalf. And he died in our place, taking on the debt that we deserve. And we have new life because we're saved by grace through faith in Christ, apart from works.

We live by faith in freedom. We're not constrained by the law, following the new way of the spirit rather than the old way of the law. That's the good news of Jesus that Paul preaches, but they don't get it.

[15 : 23] They don't understand all the Jews here is Paul saying law bad Moses bad. Don't follow law, which is not at all. What all what Paul is saying.

So Paul tries to clear up this misconception. He's not bound to obey the Jewish laws and customs anymore, but he decides actually I will use my freedom in Christ. I'll do that and participate in some of the rituals and customs to prove to them that I still respect the law of Moses.

I'm still a Jew. And so in verse 26, he goes to the temple and, and does this seven day ritual purification, according to the Jewish law. That's why he goes into the temple.

And that's Paul's way of offering the Jews and olive branch. That's his way of extending his handout with a gesture of goodwill. It's Paul demonstrating in his heart. I have become all things to all people so that by all means I might save some.

And he spent seven days of his time in that temple to show the Jews that he still respects the law. However, it's exactly in doing that when it backfires on him.

[16 : 26] Verse 27 says the Jews from Asia, seeing Paul in the temple, stirred the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out men of Israel help. This is the man who's teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place.

So imagine being Paul, he was only there at the temple out of love. He was there in the temple simply to reach out to them, to show them that he cared about their concerns and to address their concerns, to show them the love of Christ.

But that is exactly what backfires on him. His love for them shoots him in the foot. They misunderstand his heart. No good deed goes unpunished. And that's gotta hurt.

Have you ever been in a similar situation? Or maybe I only did that task at work to cover for you. So why are you throwing me under the bus for it? I only reached out to chat to you because I care about you and I want to make things right between us.

But why are you lashing out at me now? I only stepped in to mediate between you two because I want, I want you guys to reconcile. Why am I suddenly the bad guy? Why are you turning on me now? Why are you turning on me now? My parents are here today visiting for a few months from Toronto over there.

[17 : 32] I remember my dad would drive me to school and he'd tell me, he'd give me a lot of life advice, like, Jack Dodi Sam, wear more clothes. And I got to set up that sometimes I'd argue with him because I misunderstood that as nagging.

Like, no, I'm wearing enough. When that was just my dad's way of expressing his love and concern for me. So sorry, dad, about that. But can you relate when you pour yourself out to care for somebody, but they misunderstand your heart and it comes back to hurt you.

No good deed goes unpunished. That's what happened to Paul. And on top of that, they misunderstood the facts of the matter. They were misunderstood. They must understood the facts about that situation.

In verse 28, it says, Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place. Now it was a crime punishable by death to bring Gentiles.

That's people who weren't Jews into the temple. That would be a crime punishable by death to do that. But verse 29 continues for they had previously seen Trophimus, the Ephesians with him in the city.

[18 : 37] And they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. They supposed, assumed, guessed. They assumed that Paul had brought this Greek guy named Trophimus in.

Right? And it was such a concern to them that in verse 30, all the city was stirred up and the people ran together. They seized Paul, dragged him out of the temple and all at once the gates were shut. That's the mayhem that occurred just because of this assumption they supposed.

And let's follow their logic. Right? So Uday is here in Amalty right now. And, but actually, hey Uday, I saw you and your friend Trophimus having a picnic out at Yunlong last week.

So that means your friend Trophimus must be here today with you in Amalty. That's, that's the logic they have, but I don't see him, but he must be here because I saw you, you two there in Yunlong two weeks ago.

It makes no sense. That's the misunderstanding. And this misunderstanding turns to such chaos that they're beating him. They're dragging him out, beating him. That's, that's what we see in verse 30. They drag him out of the temple.

[19 : 37] They want to kill him. It's not just a small, isolated dispute. It says that all the city was stirred up. All Jerusalem was in confusion. There is this mob surrounding Paul and hitting him, beating him.

And it got so bad, so bad to the point that the soldiers, the Roman soldiers, the police came. And only then that's what stopped them from beating Paul. One person's yelling one thing.

Another person's yelling another thing. Kill him. Oh, men of Israel, Trophimus, it's total chaos. Help. Law of Moses, Ephesians, you defiled the temple. Away with him. Everyone's yelling one thing. Another person's yelling another.

Everyone's shouting, but no one knows what's going on. And because it was so chaotic, the Roman commander couldn't figure out what's happening. He's saying, why are these people so angry?

Why are they surrounding this guy? What did he do? He must have done something because these guys are so mad. What did he do? So the commander orders Paul to be arrested and brought into the army's barracks.

[20 : 35] And I love this next part because it just shows how unhinged this whole situation is. So finally, the Roman tribune, the commander has a chance to get in a few words with Paul. And this is what he asked Paul in verse 38.

Are you not the Egyptian who then who recently stirred up a revolt and led the 4,000 men of the assassins out into the wilderness? Right? That's that really sounds funny, but here's my best attempt to phrase that in modern terms.

This guy asked Paul, are you not Osama bin Laden who orchestrated 9-11 leader of terrorist group Al Qaeda and then fled to a compound in Abbottabad?

Like what? What are you talking about? You think you think I'm a terrorist? You think you're to seal team six? They got him wrong to the point that he had to say, no, sir.

I am not. In fact, Osama bin Laden. I am not a terrorist. That's the mess that Paul found himself in purely because he wanted to show the Jews that he cared about their law. And hey, before we point fingers, let's let's admit it.

[21 : 42] Don't we also get angry? And by jumping to conclusions, don't we also do that? That being quick to speak and slow to listen. And I can be the first to raise my hand.

Cause I've, I can admit I've read too much into the tone of a short WhatsApp message. Okay. I've read too much into that. I've assumed someone's intentionally ignoring me just because they were slow to respond.

I thought they didn't want to meet up or something. And that's why James one verse six, verse 19 says, let every person be quick to hear slow to speak slow to anger for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Anger is an emotion that naturally comes very quickly. The Bible says, let us be slow to anger and listen first before casting judgment. Now, before Jojo and I got married, let's just say we were people who are quicker to speak quicker to anger at that time.

And now in one of our premarital counseling sessions, James and Christina, they led us into, it was a session on communication. And as a practical exercise, they asked us to practice listening.

[22 : 54] What we do is, um, one person could say their side of the story and the other person, rather than itching to reply or, or just casting judgment on what's right and wrong, preparing a reply in their head.

No, that's not true. Um, we would have to first listen to understand, listen without interrupting and listen to understand. And we would show that by before responding with for applying, saying our side of the story, we had to demonstrate we were listening by summarizing what they said.

Hey, this is what I heard you say, right or wrong, whether I disagree or not. This is what you said. This is your heart in the matter and to acknowledge how they felt, um, before, before, before

speaking.

And that's, that's, that's something that's been helpful for us to, so that we can practice being quicker to listen, slower to speak. And it's too bad that Jojo and I went mattress shopping before this because that whole, we're gonna save it a few hours.

Um, and I've also heard it in the context of debating. It could be philosophical debates or apologetics. Um, in order to argue, you have to be able to express your opponent's argument better than they could.

[24:02] You have to understand their view well enough so that they can say, actually, you said it better than I could. And only then do you have the right to refute them. Proverbs 18 verse 13 says, if one gives an answer before he hears it is his folly and shame.

It is folly and shame to be so passionately upset about something because of a misunderstanding. Just purely because we fail to listen. That's folly and shame. The Bible teaches us to be quick to listen.

However, at the same time, you can actually find that same advice elsewhere. Self-help books like seven habits of highly effective people will teach you the same thing about empathetic listening. You can read that in counseling textbooks. The world's trying that too. It's, it's good. The Bible teaches us to be quick to listen and these are good practices, but how do we do that? What sets us apart?

Because doing this listening, being slow to anger, it's easier said than done. It's especially hard when you feel like you're the one being misunderstood. When your motives are being questioned, when people assume the worst of you, when every, in that case, every instinct of our flesh screams, we have to fight back.

[25:13] We want to defend a representation. We want to prove that we're right. How do we find the strength to respond with grace in a situation like that? Because yes, we have to be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, but it's hard.

It can be really hard. Think about Paul. He's bruised. He's bloodied and yet, and yet he's the one arrested at the same time. The Jews want him dead.

The Romans think he's a terrorist. The crowd is so crazy that the soldiers had to physically pick him up and carry him away so that he wouldn't be killed. The adrenaline has to be flowing.

His heart is pounding. It's a high stress environment. It's chaos. And in that chaos, I find Paul's response so fascinating because it's, it's this fight or flight situation, but yet he's not in a hurry to enter the barracks to safety.

But neither does he look back and fight and swing at those who hurt him. Paul finds the strength in that situation to turn around and address the crowd, not in outrage, but with grace.

[26:17] I have something to say into this mess, but not to fight back, not to defend myself, but to show you the love of Jesus. And that's incredible. An attitude like that doesn't come from just a listening exercise.

Grace like that isn't normal. It's only possible because we've been met with grace. Paul, he experienced the love of Christ and that turned his entire life upside down.

That changed him. And that's how he can respond with grace. Now Paul shares the story of how he was once with them. I was one of you in the angry mob, but Jesus saved him.

He was a persecutor of the church, but was transformed when he encountered Jesus. And that's how he's able to love those who are persecuting him now. And as we look at Paul's story, we see in the mess, in the misunderstanding, how it is that we can respond with grace, with the grace of Christ.

How can we respond with grace in such a situation? And first we can respond with grace, remembering that we've been shown grace. We can show grace because we've been shown grace first.

[27:18] Now here, Paul is retelling his conversion story from Acts chapter nine, how Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus. And he's not just telling the story because he likes telling stories.

He's retelling what Luke already recorded in Acts nine. But there's this point he's trying to make. And it starts by establishing this, that I am just like you. I am like you.

I was just like you. Paul reached out to them by speaking his language. He literally spoke their language because he was speaking Greek to the Romans. And then he switched to the language

Hebrew or Aramaic.

He was, he spoke their language. He also was speaking the language figuratively earlier in the temple. By going to the temple and respecting their laws and customs and to speak into their culture.

And he's telling them, I'm still a Jew. That's in chapter 22, verse three. I am a Jew. To follow Jesus isn't to break away from Judaism. Jesus is actually the promised Messiah.

[28:20] Jesus is a savior that they've all been waiting for. He's the fulfillment of our people's hopes and dreams. He's, he's the fulfillment of all the old Testament prophecies. And actually to be a true Jew is to follow Jesus.

That's Paul's point here. And he's also telling them, I was just like you. I was just like you standing in the crowd. In fact, persecuting the way of Jesus, just like you are to me.

I dragged followers of Jesus to jail. I approved of killing them. I was actually the leader of this whole angry mob. And yet Jesus showed me grace. While I was his enemy, Jesus came to me.

The reason Jesus came to me on the road to Damascus, not to confront me in anger, but to show me that he really did die on the cross for my sins and rise from the dead. And in light of that grace, we can look to people who beat us half to death and speak with patience and love.

That's what Paul did when we're misunderstood and under attack. It's so easy to respond in anger. How could they say that about me? How could they so thoroughly misinterpret my intentions?

[29:29] But the way of Jesus is to look at their angry faces. And remember that was me. I was a sinner. I was in need of grace. I'm no better.

We show grace because he first showed us grace. We forgive because he forgave us. We love because he first loved us. Now, how does our forgiveness translate into forgiving others?

For me, one of the most foundational passages, when I think of forgiveness has, has got to be Romans eight, Romans eight, verses 33 and 34. Who shall bring any charge against God's elect.

It is God who justifies who is to condemn. Christ. Jesus is the one who died more than that. Who was raised. Who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Romans eight.

The point there is to tell us that, that I can have full confidence that there is no condemnation for me because I am in Christ. Jesus. God is the one who declares me God justified. Who can accuse me in that case.

[30:32] Christ. Jesus is the one interceding, praying for me. Who can condemn me. Romans eight tells me that I am fully forgiven. No condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. But when you sit in that, meditate on that more, shake that tree a bit more.

There's another fruit that falls out. And it's that Christ didn't just die for me alone. He died for us, for us all, for my brother, to my left, my sister, to my right.

God also declares them not guilty in Christ. And how can I bring any charge against God's elect when it's the same God who justifies both of us? How can I condemn when it's the same Christ who intercedes for us all?

Picture us standing in the courtroom before God, the judge with Christ, the advocate by our side. And God says to us, he swings the gavel and says, because of the blood of Christ, I declared you justified, not guilty.

That ought to fill us with joy and worship for all eternity. And then we walk off. Our brother walks up and God says that same judgment to them, forgiven in Christ.

[31:40] But when we hear that rather than praising God for his grace and mercy, we turn to God and anger and say, but he misunderstood me. She talked behind my back.

He didn't appreciate me despite everything I did for him. She's guilty. Punish him. You can't say that when you've been struck by grace, when you know the grace that God has shown you.

And the more we love the blood of Christ, the more we will want to show grace and forgiveness to others. How can I say to you, you're guilty when it is my God who declares you justified?

How can I look upon the same savior who died for me and say that Jesus, your death was not enough for them. To do that is to shout over Jesus while Jesus is interceding for you.

I'm selling Jesus. Your blood is unworthy. Your blood is not sufficient to cover their sin. And how can I say that when, when Jesus is shouting my blood, wash them white as snow. Forgive them father because of my sake.

[32:46] If Christ's blood is good enough for me, it's good enough for you. It's good enough for him. It's good enough for her. When we love Christ who died for us, it ought to move us to worship.

I want to see Christ exalted. I want to see his name lifted high and actually where sin increase grace abounded all the more. When I'm insulted, when I'm mistreated, when I'm misunderstood, I get to see the precious blood of my savior cover a multitude of sins.

When I lay down my anger and forgive. So, Oh Lord, help me to forgive for your namesake. You are worthy of that praise. And for those who are not yet in Christ, it'll make us want to cry out, Lord, have mercy on them.

Don't send them to hell. I'd rather see them forgiven because your grace is magnified and saving the worst of sinners. Think of perhaps world leaders causing chaos.

How glorious would it be to see them turn to Christ, drop their weapons, stop the wars, and become the world. And become servant leaders. Forgive them Lord.

[33:55] Because I want to see your name exalted among the nations. Forgive our enemies for your namesake. When we're misunderstood, we can respond in grace as we rejoice in the magnitude of God's grace shown to us.

As our hearts cry out in worship for the lamb that who was slain, we will long to see grace extended to others. And that's the first reason we respond with grace.

By remembering the grace God has shown us and rejoicing in it. And secondly, we respond with grace because we've been transformed by grace. We've been changed by his grace.

Because Jesus didn't forgive us when he died on the cross for us. He didn't just forgive us. He also rose from the dead and changes us, transformed us, gives us new life. And that's the second part of Paul's argument in sharing his story.

That's the crux of his argument is in fact, his changed life. He's saying this, look at my life. I am a Jew. I grew up in the city right here with you in Jerusalem.

[35:02] I was born in Tarsus, but I grew up here in Jerusalem. You guys know me. I was taught by one of your most respected teachers, Gamaliel. I was taught to keep the strictest letter of the law.

And I actually kept it better than you. I was zealous for the law, even more than you were. I persecuted the way to death. I killed Christians. I dragged them to prison. And even your authorities, the high priest, all the government officials, all the Jewish authorities, they know me. I was actually their representative. I had a letter from them authorizing me to, to, to go grab Christians in Damascus. And bring them to jail. You know, how genuinely I love the law and hated Christians.

But can't you see that my life is different? What can explain my life now? What can explain that I am standing here before you being dragged out of the temple and beaten to death?

That how I once devoted my life to crushing the church. I am now, I would risk everything for his namesake. How can you explain who someone who hated Jesus so much now can't shut up about Jesus and sing his praise?

[36:10] It doesn't make sense. It's not possible. Unless, unless I really did see Jesus. Unless he really did rise from the dead. Unless I really did see the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus.

And that changed everything. That's Paul's argument. That he opened my eyes and for the first time now I could see. That's the reason I'm here today. My life now testifies that Jesus is alive.

That's Paul's point. That my changed life can only be explained by one thing. And that's Jesus. Let's tell our story. Let's tell our experience of being transformed by him.

And we, there's a simple framework we can use for sharing our testimony, sharing our story before Christ, what we were like before Christ, encountering Christ, and then how we are new after Christ. Before Christ, Paul hated the church and put Christians to death. He encountered Christ on the road to Damascus in a vision. And when his eyes were opened and after Christ, now he's changed to be relentlessly preaching Christ, even to the point of suffering and death.

[37:13] I am ready not only to be in prison, but even die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And that raises a question for us. What's changed after Christ for us? How does our life look different?

Have our lives really been changed by the gospel in our story? In our story, is there the good news of Christ or is there barely any news? Before Christ, perhaps we idolized studies, careers, family, money.

After Christ, what has changed? Before Christ, we were angry, envious, sexually immoral. After Christ, what's different now? How does our life show that Christ is alive in you?

And perhaps today we can, we can start by considering how we respond to how we respond to offense and misunderstanding. If we're praying for opportunities to witness to those around us at work, at school, in our families, when we're mistreated, when we're misunderstood, when we're not heard, that's an opportunity to show that the spirit of Christ is alive in us.

When they don't appreciate us, when they twist our words and we can respond like Jesus with the grace of Christ, that's a testimony to the world that Jesus is alive. And so we can ask God to transform us.

[38:31] We know that the spirit of Christ who raised Jesus from the dead lives in us. We can ask him to change our lives so that we can be a light to this world and glorify him in this way.

And even when we fall short, when someone says that thing and we snap back at them, we know there's grace. We know that we're forgiven in his name. So when we're misunderstood, when we're not heard, let us respond with grace because we've been transformed.

We're changed by grace and we can keep turning to him. We have, our testimony is not just in the past, not just that one time, 10 years ago, when we turned to Jesus and we encountered him at that youth camp, but it's an ongoing thing every day, every moment God is alive.

The spirit is in me. He's working in me. And every day I have new stories to tell of how Jesus is alive because we're transformed by grace. But even so, even when we do all this, even when we do all this, we might not receive the response we want.

Let's finish off by reading verse 22 in chapter 22. It says up to this word, they listened to him. That word being the Gentiles up to this word.

[39:49] They listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said away with such a fellow from the earth for he should not be allowed to live. He should not be allowed to live. That must be so disappointing because Paul is single minded on his mission to preach the good news of Jesus.

They misunderstood his teaching. They misunderstood his heart. They misunderstood all the facts of this situation. They called him a terrorist. But even as he's dragged away from those looking to kill him, he takes that as an opportunity to show them the grace of Christ.

And yet, despite all that, when they hear the single word Gentile, when they hear that word Gentile, not Jew, Roman, perhaps they're outraged and they want to kill him again.

And that's because they were so angry that God might show grace to their enemies, that God might actually have mercy on the Roman people who were persecuting them. They were so angry that God might actually show mercy to the enemies.

So outraged that they couldn't receive the grace that God would give them. It's confusing when we're doing our best to live for Christ. So listen, respond with grace and share our story.

[41:04] But yet, why isn't that person changing? Why won't they hear me out? Well, when that happens, we can remember these, these truths first, remember that they rejected Jesus, that Jesus was rejected.

When we're misunderstood, when our stories fall on deaf ears, we actually have the privilege to share in Christ's suffering, to identify with him in being rejected and scorned.

We walk the same path we walked. That's proof that we are followers of Christ. When we can follow that road that he walked. First Peter two says, he committed no sin. Neither was deceit found in his mouth.

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting him to entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness by his wounds. You have been healed. Jesus suffered for our sake.

[42:08] Innocent. And even when others don't understand us, it's God who saves. We're called to be faithful and just follow the way of Jesus. And God's the one who changes hearts.

Second, we can remember that we are, even if we're not understood and known, that we are fully known and fully loved by God. Because why can something so small as picking a mattress flare up into such anger?

It's because beneath that upsetness, that anger, we're all desperately longing to be seen and known and loved by someone.

Tim Keller put it like this. To be loved, but not known is comforting, but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear, that rejection. But to be fully known and fully loved.

Well, that's a lot like being loved by God. And that's what we need more than anything. When people don't hear our side of the story, it hurts because it taps into that fear that we won't be seen, we'll be rejected, that we won't be understood and valued.

[43:10] And that does hurt. But in the midst of that hurt, we can find comfort that we are fully known and fully loved by God. The one who intricately created us, who knitted us in our mother's womb, that he knows our heart.

He knows the facts of the situation. He knows the struggle. He knows us deeply, even our sin. He knows all of it. And yet loved us enough to send his son to die for us.

And when we rest in that truth that we're known and loved by God, then we don't have to fight so hard to defend ourselves and our side of the story. We can be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.

When the world doesn't hear us out, we can respond with grace of Christ, knowing that we're loved by him. There is one who knows us intimately and he declares us fully righteous in Christ.

So let our hearts also cry out. Let's share that heart of God to cry out for others to know that grace. Also let's do that. And now before we respond in song, I want us to have a short moment of reflection, respond in reflection and some silence.

[44:19] Think of when you've been quick to anger. Let's take a moment. You can bow your heads, close your eyes and reflect. Think, has there been a moment when we've been quick to anger, quick to speak, yet slow to listen?

Is there someone we have offended in that way? Confess that to God and know that in Christ, you're forgiven. Is there anybody you need to apologize to?

Any situation like that? Spend a moment in reflection. Let's also reflect.

Is there somebody who's offended you? Who's offended you? Is there anyone that you're struggling to love? That you're holding anger towards?

A situation where you've been misunderstood or you feel that? Let's pray for strength to show grace in that situation. Let's pray together.

[45:38] God, we look to you as our Father who made us, intimately loves us, knows us completely.

It's numbered every hair of a head. God, thank you that you've shown us grace. That while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

And we know you understand us. You are like us in every respect, yet without sin. You know what it's like to be beaten, to have people yelling at you, crucify him.

People saying, you're not the son of God. You know what that feels like. So Lord, help us to, to people who follow the way of Jesus.

Who follow in your footsteps. We're just full of love for our enemies. Just been transformed by grace. I just love your grace. Love what your son did for us on the cross.

[46:46] And want to see your blood wash a multitude of sins. Help us to be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. And shine as your light in a crooked and twisted generation.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Yeah, I don't know about all of you guys, but I'm feeling pretty convicted by today's message.

That Jesus died for us all. And usually when I would hear that, I would just think, oh, Jesus died for me. But today's message is calling us to remember, he died for the person next to you.

He died for the person who is in the MTR beside you. Trying to get in front of you, trying to cut in line. Or the coworker who is really annoying or choose too hard.

It's really annoying. He died for each and every one of those people. Can we remember that? Can we remember what he has done for us?

[47:54] Can we remember where our life would have been without him? Because if he cannot remember that, we are in the risk of looking at someone who is in need of that grace and say, I would never.

So I pray that as we go into our weeks, we can be Jesus people. We can be love to those who don't deserve it. Because we have been given so much.

Say, oh Lord, we pray for just a good memory for us to remember the grace that we have been offered.

If we don't forget where life could have been, couldn't have been without you. We can always be grateful to you, Lord. So we can extend the same grace that we've been given to those around us.

That we can choose the Jesus way. We can choose to surrender because there is a higher hope. Than the mattress or than the small battle that we are seeing in front of us. There is a bigger hope. [48:55] And that is hope in you. So pray this all in Jesus name. Everyone take a seat. Everyone take a seat.

Thank you Uday.

We reached the end of our service now. Something that is on my heart is that this whole Christianity thing is beyond just a worldview. It's beyond just a theological concept.

If we truly believe what we say we believe, we live it out. And we live as those who follow and the one who suffered. Who was wrongly accused.

And so I pray, we pray that as we step away from here, that there would be courage in us. That we would live in a way that's just different. Different, different, set apart, holy, as we go out into this world that is tearing itself apart.

[50:00] Would we just choose, choose the Jesus way?