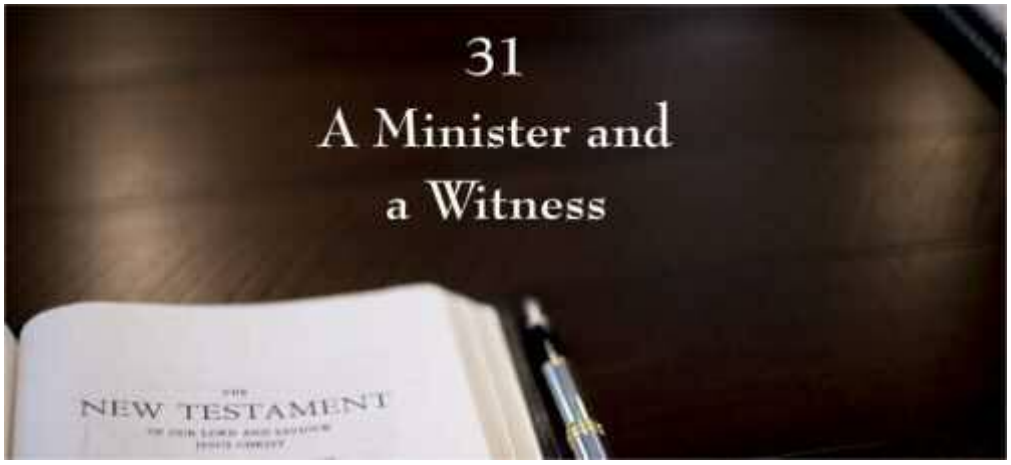

Scheduled for study July 29-August 4, 2019. Every missionary is a witness. Their purpose of missionaries is not to be personally recognized and glorified, but to offer to others the gospel of our Father. Paul did just that, and no matter how it was received he continued to preach, for what was most important was the opportunity presented to him by the Lord to save the souls of others.

Day 1

Acts 22:1-21; 26:1-29 - Disciples of Jesus Christ share their testimonies boldly.

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. Impressions from the Holy Ghost are often quiet and sometimes fleeting. Recording your impressions allows you to reflect on them more deeply. As you read Acts 22-28, write down the thoughts and feelings that come to you and take time to ponder them.

As I read the manual for today's lesson I found myself actually making excuses for why I am not more bold about declaring what I have learned and what I feel about the gospel when I talk to others. When I realized I was excusing myself I had to stop and try to figure out why I was doing it. Surely I couldn't be as bold as Paul was when he was facing down a mob that wanted tear him apart. After all, he was an Apostle and had special knowledge I don't have, right?

This thought made me wonder what special knowledge he had that I can't have. Is your testimony any more real to you than mine is to me? Is what someone else has learned

from the Spirit somehow more valid than what we have learned from the Spirit? I suddenly realized that when we learn of the reality of something we will be held responsible for that knowledge. True, there probably is a depth of knowledge an Apostle has that I don't have, but that makes no difference when it comes to the Lord's desire that we each open our mouth and share what we know. In this aspect we are both on equal footing.

Whether I am a new member of the Church, with only the most rudimentary knowledge of spiritual things, or someone who has seen into the deep mysteries of the universe, God still requires that we both be willing to open our mouths and share what we know to be true with our brothers and sisters. This is just being basically good people. When we try to hoard our knowledge of the ways of God, He will withhold those ways from us. I truly believe that He will only share with us as we are willing to share with others. It is sort of a "do unto others ..." kind of thing. This falls under the same category as 'if you do it unto one of the least of these my Brethren you have done it unto me'.

God does not expect us to be silent until we understand the full depth and breadth of the gospel plan. He expects us to take whatever we have been able to obtain in gospel knowledge and share it freely with others. There is no obligation on their part to accept it, but there is an obligation on our part to share it. We have made covenants to represent Christ in all places and at all times. Can you think of a time Jesus was too timid to share what he knew about God with someone he met? Why do you think he wasn't timid? In other words, why do you think he was bold in his declarations?

Might the Savior's statements to others have been motivated just by knowledge? I doubt it. His interactions with everyone are powered by his love for others. Shouldn't ours be powered by love as well? He has promised us that perfect love casts out fear. I hope you will bear with a personal lesson I was taught in high school.

My piano teacher was formidable. She terrified me. I had a recital coming up and kept messing up my performance. She finally stopped me in frustration and asked me why I wasn't able to perform my piece. I told her how afraid I was of what those in the audience would think of me when I made a mistake, and that just made me mess up more. She told me I was just being selfish. She said, "You are sharing something beautiful with these people you love. Focus on the joy you feel in your music and the

ability and opportunity to share that with them. The mistakes will be forgotten, but the joy you share will always be remembered."

This focus on sharing the joy is why we can, and should, be bold in our sharing of the gospel. There is nothing for which we need apologize. When we focus more on sharing the joy the gospel has brought us, rather than worrying what someone may think of us because we aren't stellar in our delivery, we can feel comfortable that the Lord will be with us in our efforts to teach his gospel to our brothers and sisters around us. All that really matters is whether or not we are willing to open our mouths and say whatever the Lord puts in our mind and heart to say.

Day 2

Acts 22:1-21; 26:9-20 - Why are there differences between the three accounts of Paul's vision of Jesus Christ?

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. Impressions from the Holy Ghost are often quiet and sometimes fleeting. Recording your impressions allows you to reflect on them more deeply. As you read Acts 22-28, write down the thoughts and feelings that come to you and take time to ponder them.

Some may have a problem with retelling a story differently depending on the crowd, but we all do it. If you are telling your best friend about your new favorite movie you will include details your best friend will find exciting and interesting. After all you want your friend to like what you like. But if you are telling about a movie you just saw to someone who doesn't go to movies, and frankly isn't really interested in what you have to say, chances are astronomically high that you will abbreviate your version of the retelling.

The trick when we run into these variations is to try to piece together a picture that is made up of all the parts of the whole. When we take the details from all the accounts of Paul's vision or Joseph Smith's first vision, and put them together, we have a much clearer version of what really happened.

Day 3

Acts 23:10-11; 27:13-25, 40-44 - The Lord stands by those who strive to serve Him.

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. Impressions from the Holy Ghost are often quiet and sometimes fleeting. Recording your impressions allows you to reflect on them more deeply. As you read Acts 22-28, write down the thoughts and feelings that come to you and take time to ponder them.

This lesson introduces a good question. When do you feel the Lord's presence in your life the most, during times of peace and prosperity, calm and quiet, or during times that try your soul?

Why do you think that is?

Think about what was happening in your life when you have uttered your most heartfelt prayers. Was that when all was going smoothly for you?

What circumstances led up to your biggest breakthroughs in your personal testimonies of spiritual things? Were you relaxing at home one day and the heavens opened and showered down knowledge on you, or were you spiritually, physically, or emotionally struggling with something?

When have you had the Lord fill your mouth with wisdom that was beyond your own? Were you watching television or sharing time and love with a friend who needed help?

How does this lesson today help you see why the Lord stands by us in times of difficulty and struggle?

Day 4

Acts 24:24-27; 26:1-3, 24-29; 27 - I can choose to accept or reject the words of God's servants.

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. Impressions from the Holy Ghost are often quiet and sometimes fleeting. Recording your impressions allows you to reflect on them more deeply. As you read Acts 22-28, write down the thoughts and feelings that come to you and take time to ponder them.

Hoping you have already read today's reading, I would like to jump in and divide the material into two thoughts. The first thought is about those who accept the gospel when they hear it. Let's talk about God's children. Think about what you know of humanity. Do you know of any family where every person in the home is the same? where they act the same, think the same, commit to things in the same way? Do you know any group

of people where this is true? God has many billions of children. Every one of these children are unique in multiple ways.

In the Book of Abraham chapter three tells us that whenever you place two spirits next to each other one will always be greater, i.e. have a greater capacity, than the other. It doesn't matter which two you put next to each other, no two are identical, no matter how many children there are. Even by itself this is a mind-boggling concept. But let's now bring those unique children down into mortality. We don't come into mortality with a tag on our toe identifying us as having any one particular quality about us. God knows all our qualities, but we are completely in the dark as to who has which abilities and propensities/proclivities/dispositions.

In several places in the scriptures the Savior makes reference to those whom the Father has given him. These individuals are mentioned as a group in the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and in the Doctrine and Covenants. They are hidden among us. If the Father has given righteous people to the Savior, in other words people who, no matter what their circumstances will be obedient to God's commandments, then there will also be many who will prefer to do their own thing and go their own way in mortality. Since we don't know which is which, we must take the gospel message to all, so that all people have the opportunity to say yes or no to God's invitation to return home.

Paul understood that not everyone he taught would be interested in his message. But he wasn't interested in those who had no interest. He was looking for those few (note the word "few") who would hear the word of God and light up with joy. These are the ones he sought, but to find them required talking to everyone to see who responded positively to the message. We are all in the same situation as Paul. We are surrounded by people, but we don't know who might respond positively to God's message of hope, and who will be completely uninterested, or even antagonistic towards the message. We won't know until we have opened our mouths and said something.

The second thought has to do with the story of Paul warning the ship's captain that if he sailed at that time great hurt would come upon the people and upon his ship. Outwardly, there was absolutely zero indication that Paul knew what he was talking about, so using his worldly wisdom he chose to ignore Paul's warning and sail anyway. And as usual when we ignore the warnings of a prophet, his ship was wrecked, cargo lost, and he was ruined in the end. Fortunately, for Paul's sake the Lord spared all the people from death.

This second thought has to do with the members of the Church. When the prophet tells us time is running out or is short and if we don't learn to increase our ability to have personal revelation we will learn too late that we can't be saved, do we believe him? We have been warned, so what have you changed in your personal life and in the life of your family members to make the required changes to increase personal revelation in your life? Can you name specific steps you are taking to do so?

Just as there are an almost infinite variety of abilities and desires among God's children, so too is there an unlimited amount of variation among those who have accepted the gospel of Christ. Some will follow the prophet's counsel, others will ignore it until it is too late, while others, though claiming to have accepted and obey the word of God will fight against God's chosen servant. We don't know who will fall into each group, nor can we control who falls into each group, with the exception of ourselves. I can only control me. You can only control you. It is up to us to encourage and promote obedience to the rest of God's children to save them from the results of the troubles that loom in the near future.

Day 5

Acts 24:16 - Ridding ourselves of offense towards God and man

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. Impressions from the Holy Ghost are often quiet and sometimes fleeting. Recording your impressions allows you to reflect on them more deeply. As you read Acts 22-28, write down the thoughts and feelings that come to you and take time to ponder them.

On the surface Paul may seem to be a contradiction in definitions. First he is persecuting the Saints, consenting to their deaths, and dragging them physically, and unkindly to be judged of those wicked rulers of the Jews so they could receive the most severe of punishments for their beliefs. Then, with only one experience and warning from the Lord Paul changes his tune and becomes the greatest preacher of Christ in the early Christian Church. What's up with that?

The explanation that ties these two seemingly opposite behaviors into one consistent theme in Paul's life is his desire to serve God. All Paul wanted to do was to serve God, and if his church leaders told him that punishing these blasphemers was what was needed, why then Paul would do it with his whole soul. For he was "all in!" Then one

day the Savior appears to him and shows him that he is putting his life and faith in the wrong people. The very person he should be preaching and following is the person he has been persecuting. Because of Paul's core belief to do good, he now becomes the most staunch supporter of Christ. He is now willing to suffer anything and everything needed in order to demonstrate to the Lord that he was 100% obedient.

We see this behavior in people who fight against the Church of God, but then become converted and are our most faithful members, spending the rest of their lives seeking to make reparations for the damage they did in their days of ignorance. Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah fall into this camp as well. A modern example of seemingly contradictory behavior that is actually completely consistent is that of Elder Bruce R. McConkie. He firmly believed that all kinds of things would have to happen in the world before those of black ancestry would be able to receive the priesthood, and he said as much in his writings. Then the revelation on the priesthood was received and he wholeheartedly embraced the revelation and changed his teaching. Many people had a problem with his change of position. He could never figure out why that bothered them. He had made his best guess based on what he knew about the promises made about the priesthood then the revelation cleared everything up and he changed his position to align with the prophet. He couldn't figure out why others had such a difficult time with that concept.

The question for us is, are we willing to repent and change our position when we are shown the truth? The Lord is more concerned about those who won't believe than He is about those who readily believe and have to be corrected in their beliefs. For the second group is willing to repent and align themselves with the truth. The first group chooses not to believe at all. We need to recognize which group we belong to.

Scripture Study and Home Evening

Acts 28:22-24 - How do we handle name calling?

My wife and I both served missions. I hated tracting door to door. When we were rejected I took it very personally. I felt that I had personally been turned away. My wise wife, on the other hand, knew that they were rejecting the message she bore and not her. Paul was like my wife in that he understood that he would run into every kind of person in the course of his preaching. Some would accept, but most would either

ignore, or they would choose to argue, while some would become outright angry and unpleasant.

Paul didn't take their belief in his message personally. How they reacted to what he told them was between them and the Lord. Their reaction to the message he brought had nothing to do with Paul. He understood that conversion is a deeply personal matter.

Here is a PDF of this week's study material.
Print it out for greater convenience in your studies.

New Testament 31