

“The Supremacy of Sovereignty”

Acts 21:17-36

February 21, 2016

The Jerusalem Church Misunderstood His Message (Acts 21:18-26)

Apparently that first meeting was devoted primarily to fellowship and personal matters, because the second meeting was given over to Paul's personal report of his ministry to the Gentiles. **The Jerusalem leaders had agreed years before that Paul should minister to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-10)**, and the elders rejoiced at what they heard. The phrase "declared particularly" means "**reported in detail, item by item.**" **Paul gave a full and accurate account, not of what he had done, but of what the Lord had done through his ministry (see 1 Cor. 15:10).**

You get the impression that the legalists had been working behind the scenes. No sooner had Paul finished his report than the elders brought up the rumors that were then being circulated about Paul among the Jewish Christians. It has well been said that, though a rumor doesn't have a leg to stand on, it travels mighty fast!

What were his enemies saying about Paul? Almost the same things they said about Jesus and Stephen: he was teaching the Jews to forsake the laws and customs given by Moses and the fathers.

They were not worried about what Paul taught the Gentile believers, because the relationship of the Gentiles to the Law had been settled at the Jerusalem Conference ([Acts 15](#)). In fact, the elders carefully rehearsed the matter ([Acts 21:25](#)), probably for the sake of Paul's Gentile companions. **The leaders were especially concerned that Paul's presence in the city not cause division or disruption among the "thousands of Jews ... zealous of the Law" ([Acts 21:20](#)).**

But, why were so many believing Jews still clinging to the Law of Moses? **Had they not read Romans and Galatians?** **Probably not, and even if they had, old customs are difficult to change.** In fact, one day God would have to send a special letter to the Jews, the Epistle to the Hebrews, to explain the relationship between the Old and New Covenants. As **Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse used to say, "The Book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrews to tell them to stop being Hebrews!"** **It was not until the city and the temple were destroyed in a.d. 70 that traditional Jewish worship ceased.**

Paul did warn the Gentiles not to get involved in the old Jewish religion ([Gal. 4:1-11](#)); but he nowhere told the Jews that it was wrong for them to practice their customs, *so long as they did not trust in ceremony or make their customs a test of fellowship* ([Rom. 14:1-15:7](#)). **There was freedom to observe special days and diets, and believers were not to judge or condemn one another. The same grace that gave the Gentiles freedom to abstain also gave the Jews freedom to observe.** All God asked was that they receive one another and not create problems or divisions.

It seems incredible that Paul's enemies would accuse him of these things, for all the evidence was against them. **Paul had Timothy circumcised before taking him along on that second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-3). Paul had taken a Jewish vow while in Corinth (Acts 18:18), and it was his custom not to offend the Jews in any way by deliberately violating their customs or the Law of Moses (1 Cor. 9:19-23).** However, rumors are not usually based on fact, but thrive on half-truths, prejudices, and outright lies.

The leaders suggested that Paul demonstrate publicly his reverence for the Jewish Law. All they asked was that he identify himself with four men under a Nazarite vow ([Num. 6](#)), pay for their sacrifices, and be with them in the temple for their time of purification. He agreed to do it. If it had been a matter involving somebody's personal salvation, you can be sure that Paul would never have cooperated; for that would have compromised his message of salvation by grace, through faith. But this was a matter of personal conviction on the part of Jewish believers who were given the freedom to accept or reject the customs.

Paul reported to the priest the next day and shared in the purification ceremony, but he himself did not take any vows. **He and the men had to wait seven days and then offer the prescribed sacrifices. The whole plan appeared to be safe and wise, but it did not work. Instead of bringing peace, it caused an uproar; and Paul ended up a prisoner.**

In the temple, separating the court of the Gentiles from the other courts, stood a wall beyond which no Gentile was allowed to go (note [Eph. 2:14](#)). On the wall was this solemn inscription: "No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught so doing will have himself to blame for his ensuing death." The Romans had granted the Jewish religious leaders authority to deal with anybody who broke this law, and this included the right of execution. This law plays an important role in what happened to Paul a week after he and the four Nazarites began their purification ceremonies.

Some Jews from Asia saw Paul in the temple and jumped to the conclusion that he had polluted their sacred building by bringing Gentiles past the barricade. It is likely that these Jews came from Ephesus, because they recognized Paul's friend Trophimus, who came from Ephesus. With their emotions running at full speed, and their brains in neutral, these men argued: (1) wherever Paul went, his Gentile friends went; (2) Paul was seen in the temple; therefore, his friends had been in the temple too! Such is the logic of prejudice.

They seized Paul and would have killed him had the Roman guards not intervened in the nick of time. (At least 1,000 soldiers were stationed in the Antonia Fortress at the northwest corner of the temple area.) The temple crowd was in an uproar, completely ignorant of what was going on. The scene reminds you of the riot in Ephesus. Compare [Acts 21:30](#) with [Acts 19:29](#), and [Acts 21:34](#) with [Acts 19:32](#). It required the chief captain (Claudius Lysias, [Acts 23:26](#)), 2 centurions, and perhaps 200 soldiers to get the mob under control and to rescue Paul. The

captain actually thought Paul was an Egyptian rebel who was wanted by the Romans for inciting a revolt ([Acts 21:38](#)). This explains why he had Paul bound with two chains (see [Acts 21:11](#)).

When Claudius interrogated the people, they could not explain what caused the riot because they did not really know. The original troublemakers must have escaped during the great excitement, knowing that they could not actually substantiate their charges. Since Claudius could get no help from the people in the temple, he decided to interrogate Paul; so his soldiers carried Paul from the court of the Gentiles up the stairs into the barracks. As Paul was borne away, the crowd shouted angrily, "Away with him!" This again reminds us of our Lord's arrest and trial ([Luke 23:18, 21](#); [John 19:15](#)).

At this point, Paul decided it was time to speak up; and the captain was amazed that his dangerous prisoner could speak Greek. When Paul asked for permission to address the Jews, Claudius consented, hoping that perhaps he would get enough information for an official report. He never did (see [Acts 23:23-30](#)). Paul spoke to the Jews in their native Aramaic, and this helped quiet them down.

- Bible Exposition Commentary

Paul Meets the Jerusalem Christians (21:17-26)

PAUL IS WARMLY received by the believers on his arrival in Jerusalem (v. 17). The next day he and his company meet James and the elders (v. 18). **His report of what God has done elicits praise to God, though there is no mention of the gift Paul brought (vv. 19-20a; but cf. 24:17).** The "we" sections stop here and start again only with the journey to Rome (27:1), at which point Luke again shares common experiences with Paul. In the intervening events Luke is probably a bystander.

The sensitive nature of what the believers tell Paul is evidenced by the tone in which they introduce their point (vv. 20b, 22b). **For the sake of the many Christians who are zealous for the Jewish law, they think it a good idea for him to dispel misrepresentations about his stand on the law by showing a willingness to submit to the law publicly.** He can do this by paying for the expenses of four fellow Christians who have taken a vow. In order to do this he must purify himself along with these people (v. 24, 26). Lest Paul misunderstand their position, they affirm that they are in agreement with the position of the Jerusalem Council regarding requirements of Gentile Christians (v. 25).

Longenecker explains the procedure that Paul subjects himself to:

Coming from abroad, Paul would have had to regain ceremonial purity by a seven day ritual of purification before he could be present at the absolution ceremony of the four Jewish Christians in the Jerusalem temple. This ritual

included reporting to one of the priests and being sprinkled with water of atonement on the third and seventh days.

This is not the same as taking upon himself a Nazirite vow. Rather, Paul must "report to the priest at the start of the seven days of purification, inform him that he was providing the funds for the offerings of the four ... men ... and return to the temple at regular intervals during the week for the appropriate rites."

Is Paul being inconsistent here? We must remember that Paul himself took a vow a few years before ([18:18](#)), so we know that he was convinced about the value of vows for Christians. But what about his opposition to works of the law in the letters? This was opposition to the belief that such works were necessary for salvation. He himself was not opposed to the law per se. *We must not forget what Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 9:20](#): "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law."* **His actions in Jerusalem are consistent with the approach expressed in this verse.**

Paul Is Arrested ([21:27-36](#))

AS PAUL WAS coming to the end of his responsibilities regarding the vows, some Jews from Asia saw him in the temple. They had earlier seen Paul in the city with Trophimus ([20:4](#)), a Gentile companion from Asia, and they assumed that he was also in the temple. Had this been true, it would have desecrated the temple, for **Gentiles could go only up to the outer court of the temple**

("the Court of the Gentiles"). They incited the Jewish people to attack Paul (vv. 27-29).

Bruce explains the seriousness of their charge:

"The Roman authorities were so conciliatory of Jewish religious scruples in this regard that they authorized the death sentence for this trespass even when the offenders were Roman citizens."

Citing evidence from Josephus and Philo, Bruce says that **notices in Latin and Greek were fixed to the barrier between the inner and outer courts, warning Gentiles that death was the penalty for going any further.**

"The whole city was aroused" (v. 30a), and the people dragged Paul out of the temple. The gates of the temple were shut (v. 30b), possibly to avoid defiling the temple from the chaos.

The rioters began beating Paul to death.

The timely intervention of the Roman commander and some of his soldiers prevented this from happening (vv. 31-32).

Paul was arrested so that he could be given a proper trial (v. 33), but because of the turmoil of the crowd he had to be carried by the soldiers (v. 35). **The crowd kept shouting, "Away with him" (v. 36).** Luke must surely have felt the significance of the

fact that some **twenty-seven years earlier, another crowd had shouted, "Away with this man!" at a spot nearby** ([Luke 23:18](#)).

As another aspect of our community commitments, we may sometimes agree to do things we feel are unnecessary for us personally but help maintain unity. Paul did this in his involvement with the four men who took a vow. He bent over backwards and submitted to the will of the body, in keeping with what he taught in [Ephesians 5:21](#): "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." But was this a mistake? Some have thought so. We would do well, of course, to heed the warning "to guard against seeing [Acts 21:17-26](#) as too positive a model inasmuch as the whole plot backfires ([vv. 27-36](#))." While it does not present a model as such, I believe it shows us how seriously Paul viewed the unity of the church and how he was willing to do everything possible to please those who were different in perspective from himself.

The plot did indeed backfire, but the Jerusalem Christians were surely grateful for the price Paul was willing to pay to express his solidarity with them. I sometimes wonder whether the ease with which commentators dub this action of Paul as a mistake indicates how far the church has strayed from viewing suffering owing to commitments as an essential ingredient of Christian community.

Moreover, Paul's participation in the vows of the four men is consistent with his teaching in his letters. As he wrote in [1 Corinthians 9](#), for evangelistic purposes he was willing to change his behavior according to his audience. He advocated the same flexibility in order to preserve the unity of the body, especially because some actions that certain Christians thought were legitimate could be a stumbling block to weaker Christians ([Rom. 14](#); [1 Cor. 8](#)). One who has died to self has a love that "does not insist on its own way" ([1 Cor. 13:5](#), NRSV). To Paul the unity of the church was so important that a big price was well worth paying in order to preserve it. We ought to recover this perspective in today's church.

More on Paul and the Jews. Luke must surely have considered the interplay between Paul and the Jewish people as important, for he writes about it so many times in Acts. In this section, even though Paul was primarily called to evangelize the Gentiles, he never gave up trying to minister to Jews and to build bridges between Judaism and Christianity. The attempt here ended in disaster, but he kept trying to win them over. In fact, the last chapter of Acts gives considerable space to describing Paul's efforts at evangelizing the Jews in Rome. There too he had the same response, with the majority of the Jews rejecting what he said so that he turned to concentrate on the Gentiles ([28:28](#)). But he never gave up trying to win the Jews.

This pattern ought to inspire us to persevere with what may be called "the establishment" and not give up on it. Perhaps we cannot derive a binding principle here. But this section helps us appreciate the efforts of those who try to bring renewal to old

structures that seem confined to traditional ways of doing things and closed to considering change.

The request of the Jerusalem Christians for Paul to be involved in the funding of the vows of four brothers is another good example of fallible Christians trying to express Christian love. We cannot be certain whether this act was a mistake. But it shows us how serious Paul was about preserving unity in the body of Christ. He was willing to do everything possible to please Christians who were different from him. This perspective needs emphasis in an age where individualism has hit the church so hard that church splits are even being viewed as a desirable means of church growth! This surely is an expression of worldliness in this age where the supposed quest for self-fulfillment has devalued the importance of lasting commitments and where, because of the pragmatic attitude, growth at the cost of another is regarded as acceptable.

The idea of the survival of the fittest at the cost of the weak may be the law of the jungle and of the marketplace, but it is not the law of the kingdom. In a study on cooperating in world evangelism, **John Stott comments, "An empirical fact is not necessarily a biblical truth... We must not assume that the world is necessarily to be a model for the church." Paul reacted with horror over divisions in the body of Christ. With biting irony he asked, "Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor. 1:13). The damage this does to Christian witness is immense.**

Just two days before I wrote this, our daily newspaper carried a letter to the editor, presumably from a Buddhist, where the

writer sarcastically expressed his feelings about divisions among the Protestants as opposed to the unity of the Roman Catholics. He ended the letter with the words, "The structure of the Christian church seems so confusing at times!" Paul's willingness to submit himself to the request of the Jerusalem leaders challenges us to greater sensitivity about Christians who are different and to greater efforts at cooperation with them.

On one of Paul's earlier visits to Jerusalem, the leaders of the church agreed that while Peter would specialize in Jewish evangelism, Paul would specialize in Gentile evangelism ([Gal. 2:7-8](#)). But that did not prevent Paul from being sensitive to the sensibilities of Jewish Christians. This is what we call the kingdom perspective. Within the one kingdom of God we may have different roles, but we work for the same King; therefore, we will help each other at personal cost to ourselves and never do things that will hurt the other. That is, the Baptist Church should not do anything to hurt the Assembly of God church down the road, and an InterVarsity chapter should not attempt to grow at the expense of a Navigators chapter on the same campus. **Recognizing our different roles and submitting to scriptural teaching about the body of Christ, we should try to help each other whenever possible and modify our plans if we find they are hurting another Christian group.**

Persevering with the establishment.

God may be calling some Christians to attempt to facilitate a renewal of biblical Christianity within older churches that others are prone to dismiss as unredeemable.

God does not call all Christians to do this. But Paul's example of persevering with the Jews should make us reluctant to criticize those who are trying to bring renewal in older churches. In fact, even those who are not called to this work ought to pray for and encourage their brothers and sisters who have stayed.

- NIV Application Commentary

In a sense all of [21:17–26:32](#) could be described as Paul's testimony before Jews, since even in the Caesarea trial scenes of chaps. [24–26](#) Paul appeared before a Jewish legal deputation and the Jewish king. But the Roman officials have a more conspicuous presence in chaps. [24–26](#), and the scene is set on their turf. In [21:17–23:35](#) Paul was in Jerusalem and in Jewish territory. First he appeared with the elders of the Jerusalem church. There he experienced something of a mini trial even before them, as they urged him to demonstrate his faithfulness to the law for the benefit of the more zealous Jewish Christians in Jerusalem ([21:17–26](#)). To comply with their wishes, he participated in a Nazirite vow, which took him to the temple. There Paul was falsely accused by some Asian Jews of having violated the sacred precincts, and a riot ensued ([21:27–36](#)).

(1) The Concern of the Jerusalem Elders

21:17–26

21:17–20a When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he received a somewhat mixed reception. On the one hand, he was received “warmly” by the brethren there (v. [17](#)). Just who formed the reception committee is not at all clear. Perhaps it referred only to the associates of Mnason with whom Paul lodged (v. [16](#)). It is more likely that Luke intended v. [17](#) as a general introduction to Paul’s arrival in Jerusalem and that “the brothers” represent his favorable reception by the Jerusalem Christian community as a whole. **There were reservations, however, and these quickly unfolded the next day when Paul and his traveling companions reported to the elders of the Jerusalem church** (v. [18](#)).

The apostles seem no longer to have been present in Jerusalem, and leadership of the congregation was now in the hands of a group of elders, with James, the brother of Jesus, as the presiding elder.

On an earlier occasion—at the Jerusalem Conference—when Paul gave a report of his successful Gentile mission, it was met with stony silence ([15:12f.](#)). Now his report was received with greater enthusiasm. **The elders “praised God” for the fruits of Paul’s work among the Gentiles** (v. [20](#)). At the Jerusalem Conference they had endorsed Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles, and so they naturally received the report of his missionary success with some elation. **But Paul’s success had created some problems for them, and they now related those to him.** Probably James spoke for the group. The new situation was their

own success in the Jewish Christian mission and the many thousands of new converts who had been made. They were all “zealous for the law.”

21:20b Faithfulness to the Torah was nothing new for the Jewish Christians. Basically, that was what the agreement at the **Jerusalem Conference** was all about. The Jewish Christians would remain faithful to the Jewish law, but Gentile converts would not be subjected to it except for the special provisions of the apostolic decree (cf. v. [25](#)). **What was new to the present situation is hidden in the word “zealous.” Paul’s arrival in Jerusalem probably was in spring of A.D. 56 or 57 during the procuratorship of Felix. Josephus described this period of the mid-50s as a time of intense Jewish nationalism and political unrest. One insurrection after another rose to challenge the Roman overlords, and Felix brutally suppressed them all.**

This only increased the Jewish hatred for Rome and inflamed anti-Gentile sentiments.

It was a time when pro-Jewish sentiment was at its height, and friendliness with outsiders was viewed askance. **Considering public relations, Paul’s mission to the Gentiles would not have been well received.**

The Jerusalem elders were in somewhat of a bind.

On the one hand, they had supported Paul’s witness to the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Conference. Now they found Paul a persona non grata and his mission discredited not only among the Jewish populace, which they were seeking to reach, but also

among their more recent converts. **They did not want to reject Paul. Indeed, they praised God for his successes. Still they had their own mission to the Jews to consider, and for that Paul was a distinct liability.**

21:21 Jews from the Diaspora likely were the ones who spread the reports among the Jerusalem Christians that Paul was inciting Jews to abandon their ancestral customs (v. [21b](#)). The rumor was that he was encouraging Diaspora Jews who lived in his Gentile mission fields to forsake the law of Moses and to abandon the practice of circumcising their children. These were serious charges, for these matters struck at the very heart of the Jews' self-identity as the people of God. The Torah, particularly in its ceremonial aspects, set them apart from all other people. Circumcision in particular was a sort of badge, a physical mark set in the flesh of every Jewish male on the eighth day after birth to denote his membership in God's covenant people. Would Paul have urged Jews to abandon this "sign of the covenant"? There is certainly no question that he argued strongly against seeing circumcision as a guarantee of salvation. It could be no substitute for faith in Christ, for becoming a new creation in the Spirit (cf. [Gal 5:6](#); [6:15](#)). Consequently, he adamantly opposed circumcision of his Gentile converts. But **there is no evidence that he ever encouraged Jewish Christians to abandon the practice and considerable indication to the contrary** (cf. [Acts 16:3](#); [1 Cor 7:18f](#)).

The same can be said for Paul's attitude toward the Torah in general. He rejected flatly the supposition that the law could be a means of salvation. **He saw faith in Christ, not law, as the sole basis for one's acceptability to God.** He adamantly opposed

anyone who sought to impose the Torah on his Gentile converts, and this was very much within the spirit of the Jerusalem Conference (cf. [15:10f.](#), [19](#), [28](#)). But there is no evidence that he urged Jewish Christians to abandon their ancestral law, and Acts would indicate that he himself remained true to the Torah in his own dealings with Jews (cf. [18:18](#); [20:6](#); [23:5](#)). In short, **Paul saw one's status in Christ as transcending the distinction between Jew and Gentile** ([Gal 3:28](#)). Being in Christ neither required that the Gentile become a Jew nor that the Jew cease to be a Jew (cf. [1 Cor 9:19f.](#)). Still, there may have been a grain of truth in the rumor that Paul was encouraging Jews of the Diaspora to abandon the Torah. It would not have been Paul's having actually urged the Jews to do so but rather the social situation of Paul's Diaspora churches.

In the Diaspora, Jews who became Christians would almost inevitably have transferred from the synagogue to the predominantly Gentile churches. [Acts 19:9](#) would indicate that this had been the case in Ephesus.

Having left the base of support for their Jewish identity in the synagogue, there would be the natural inclination to adapt to the ways of the Gentile majority in the Christian churches. Whether or not this was the case, Paul himself had not urged Jewish Christians to abandon the Torah, and there is no evidence that the elders themselves lent any credence to the allegations. Still, they had to deal with them. **Paul's presence would soon be known throughout the Jewish Christian community** (v. [22](#)). **Something had to be done to offset the rumors.**

21:22–24 The elders had evidently worked out a possible solution among themselves of a means whereby Paul could by

example demonstrate that he was still true to the Jewish law. This they now set before him (vv. 22–24). There were four Jewish Christians who had taken upon themselves a Nazirite vow, a rather extreme expression of Jewish piety. The four were nearing the end of the period of their vow and soon would be completing it with the customary ceremony in the temple. This involved cutting their hair and burning it as an offering. In addition a number of costly sacrifices were required—a male and a female lamb, a ram, and cereal and drink offerings (Num 6:14f.).

Paul was asked to join the four and bear the expenses of these rites. **Aside from paying their expenses, Paul's role in the matter is not altogether clear.** He obviously did not join in the vow because the minimum period for a Nazirite was thirty days, and only seven were involved here (v. 27). Also it could not have been a matter of a Nazirite “purification” ceremony in which he participated. There was such a purification ceremony in connection with Nazirite vows, but it was not a regular part of the Nazirite commitment; rather, it was a special provision in case the one under the vow came into contact with a corpse or became otherwise defiled (Num 6:9–12). That could not be the situation here because the Nazirite who underwent the purification rite had to begin the minimum thirty-day period of the vow all over again (Num 6:12). The **most likely** solution is that **Paul was the one who underwent purification. Often a Jew on returning to the Holy Land after a sojourn in Gentile territory would undergo ritual purification. The period involved was seven days** (cf. Num 19:12), which fits the present picture (v. 27).

Paul thus underwent ritual purification to qualify for participation in the completion ceremony of the four Nazirites which took place within the sacred precincts of the temple. This would be a thorough demonstration of his full loyalty to the Torah, not only in his bearing the heavy expenses of the vow but also in his undergoing the necessary purification himself.

21:25 James concluded his proposal to Paul with a reminder of the apostolic decrees. **The words in v. 25 are to be seen as an assurance to Paul that the basic decision of the Jerusalem Conference had not been changed.** Gentiles still were not being asked to live by the Jewish Torah—only to observe those basic ritual matters that made table fellowship and social interaction possible between Jewish and Gentile Christians.

The elders' proposal (vv. 22–24) was strictly for Paul, that he as a Jewish Christian demonstrate his fidelity to the law to offset the rumors in the Jewish Christian community.

It was a sort of compromise solution and thoroughly in accord with the picture of James at the Jerusalem Conference.

The apostolic decrees were themselves a type of compromise. James wanted both to acknowledge the legitimacy of Paul's law-free Gentile mission and to maintain an effective witness among the Jews, for which faithfulness to the law was absolutely essential.

Ultimately the compromise did not work—either in this instance for Paul or in regard to the larger issue of the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christianity.

As Jewish nationalism increased, the Gentile mission became more and more of a liability to Jewish Christianity.

NOTE: In the aftermath of the Jewish War with Rome and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Jewish Christianity was declared heretical by official Judaism; and it was no longer possible for a Christian Jew to remain in the Jewish community.

James had seen the problem well and sought to present himself as a strict, Torah-abiding Jew, doubtless to strengthen the credibility of his witness to his fellow Jews. Ultimately, he gave his life for his Christian witness, being put to death at the order of the high priest Ananus in A.D. 62.

21:26 Paul was all too ready to be a Jew to the Jews (cf. [1 Cor 9:20](#)). **We know from his letters that the collection from the Gentile churches had brought him to Jerusalem, and the major reason for this was to express the unity between Gentile and Jewish Christianity.** He knew the risks involved in coming to Jerusalem (cf. [Rom 15:31](#)). He was more than willing to participate in this symbolic act of Jewish piety if that would help to justify his Gentile mission in the eyes of the Jewish Christians. He began his purification the next day and

announced in the temple the formal date when the Nazirite ceremony would be completed (v. [26](#)). It would take place in seven days, when his own purification was fulfilled.

(2) The Riot in the Temple Area

[21:27–36](#)

[21:27](#) The purification process required a cleansing on the third and on the seventh days ([Num 19:2](#)). Likely it was on the prescribed seventh day that Paul returned to the temple to complete the ritual (v. [27](#)). He was spotted there by some Asian Jews, who immediately began to stir up a crowd against him.

Not surprisingly the opposition to Paul came from Asian Jews, probably some from Ephesus. Paul had spent three years in Ephesus and part of the time in their synagogue ([19:8](#)). They knew him well. In his Miletus address Paul alluded to plots the Ephesian Jews had already directed against him. Often Diaspora Jews were exceedingly strict in their observance of the Jewish ritual (cf. [6:9](#)), and it may have been some of these same Asian Jews who had spread the rumors about Paul throughout Jerusalem (cf. v. [21](#)).

[21:28](#) The accusations they began to make against Paul were very serious. Two were the same charges leveled against Stephen (cf. [6:13](#)): He speaks against “our law and this place”; i.e., against Torah and temple. The third charge was less specific but perhaps the most valid—that Paul taught “against our people.” In a sense Paul did. His leveling gospel of oneness of all in Jesus Christ, Greek as well as Jew, could ultimately do nothing other than reduce the significance of the

Jews as God's chosen people. In this instance they charged him with temple violation. **They accused Paul of having violated the temple by taking a Gentile beyond the court of the Gentiles into the sacred precincts that were open to Jews only**; i.e., into the area of the temple proper.

The large outer courtyard, known as the court of the Gentiles, was open to all. The temple proper was not. In fact, there was a stone barrier that separated the court of the Gentiles from the first courtyard of the temple proper, the court of the women. According to Josephus, there were warning stones set at regular intervals along this barrier, some in Greek and some in Latin, forbidding non-Jews access beyond this point. Two of these have been excavated, both with a Greek text and both with a message to the effect that any foreigner proceeding beyond the barrier did so on pain of death.

There is some question whether the warnings are of a common ancient taboo type, i.e., a warning that the divinity will strike down any violator. From the testimony of Josephus, it seems more likely that the Jews actually did themselves enforce the prohibition. **A speech attributed to Titus indicates that the Romans allowed the Jews to execute violators, even if the violators were Roman citizens (*War* 6.124f.).** There is no evidence in the extant literature of anyone ever being executed for this offense. Whether Josephus's testimony on this matter can be trusted and whether the warnings were actually enforced, the stones have been found and are a vivid testimony to the exclusiveness of first-century Jewish religion: "No Gentile to defile our temple on pain of death." This barrier with its warning stones is likely the "wall" between Jew and Greek to which Paul

alluded in [Eph 2:14](#). Paul certainly was familiar with it. He had experienced it firsthand.

21:29 The charge was unfounded. Luke made that clear (v. [29](#)). The Asian Jews had seen Paul in the city with Trophimus, one of the Ephesian representatives in the collection delegation ([20:4](#)). **They were looking for something against Paul, and they quickly jumped to the conclusion that Paul had taken the Gentile into the inner area of the temple beyond the warning stones.** Paul had in fact been there himself. He would have gone there in connection with his purification. He had not taken Trophimus there. On an occasion when he was trying to establish his Jewishness, it was the last thing he would have done! **It was an instance of sheer irony. In the temple for his own purification, Paul was accused of having defiled it.**

21:30 Luke could be accused of exaggerating in saying that “the whole city” was aroused (v. [30](#)). But one must recall that the temple area was very much the “town square.” The court of the Gentiles was a large area, and great crowds would gather there. **When all the hubbub started, people came running from every direction. Paul was dragged out of the temple proper into the court of the Gentiles.** The gates to the sacred precincts were slammed shut, perhaps to protect the area from any “further” defilement from the unseemly mob action taking place outside.

Some interpreters see a certain symbolism in the shutting of the gates. This is the last scene at the temple in Acts.

The gates were closed.

Is this symbolic that with this final refusal of God's messenger the temple was forever closed to God's purposes?

21:31 Along the northwest corner of the wall that surrounded the whole temple complex stood the Tower of Antonia, a fortress built by Herod the Great for defense of the temple. The Roman troops were garrisoned there. Antonia had several high towers, one which is said to have been 100 feet high, allowing a full view of the entire temple area. Perhaps it was a sentry posted there who first caught sight of the gathering mob and sent word to his commander, the Roman tribune in charge of the Jerusalem cohort (v. 31). This tribune, whose name is later disclosed as Claudius Lysias (23:26), would play a major role in the following two chapters.

As a tribune he was a high-ranking Roman military officer in charge of a cohort, which consisted of 1,000 soldiers (760 infantry and 240 cavalry).

Since the procurator resided in Caesarea and only made periodic visits to Jerusalem, Lysias had the prime responsibility for the Roman administration and peace-keeping within the city.

Not accidentally the barracks were located in Antonia adjacent to the temple. Stairs led from Antonia directly into the court of the Gentiles. The Romans were well aware that should any unrest arise in the city, it would most likely begin in the temple area.

21:32–33 Lysias lost no time in dealing with this riot. He evidently took a considerable contingent of soldiers with him. Verse [32](#) indicates that he took along “centurions” (“officers,” NIV). **Since a centurion commanded a hundred soldiers, and since more than one centurion is indicated, Lysias’s force on this occasion consisted of at least two hundred. It must have been a significant show of force, for the crowd immediately stopped beating Paul** (v. [32](#)). Since Paul was the obvious object of the crowd’s ire, Lysias immediately arrested him, binding him with two chains (v. [33](#)). The significance of the “two” chains is not altogether clear. Paul may have been handcuffed on both arms and chained to a soldier on each side, or **he could have been bound hand and foot, as Agabus had predicted** he would be (cf. [21:11](#)).

In any event...

*from this point on
Paul was “in chains,”
if not always literally so, at least in
the sense that he was a prisoner
to the very last word of Acts.*

21:34–36 **Lysias was totally unable to ascertain any substantive accusation against Paul because of the disorder of the crowd** (v. [34](#)). As with most mobs, many of the participants probably did not know what the commotion was all about (cf. [19:32](#)). **So Lysias ordered that Paul be taken to the barracks.**

When they reached the steps to Antonia, the soldiers had to lift Paul up and carry him to protect him from the violence of the mob (v. [35](#)).

Why this was necessary is not immediately clear. Paul may have been somewhat incapacitated from the severity of his beating. If he was bound at the feet, this would certainly explain why the soldiers found it more expedient to carry him.

As they hastened up the steps, the crowd milled below, shouting,

“Away with him!”

...the same words the mob had screamed against Jesus

(cf. [Luke 23:18](#); [John 19:15](#)).

- New American Commentary

v.17. The period which had been looked forward to for months with prayerful anxiety had now arrived, and Paul was to know, without further delay, whether or not the service which he had for Jerusalem would be accepted by the saints. To his unspeakable relief, the historian was able to say, (17) *“Now when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.”*

If Luke had given any account of the contribution Paul was bringing, we should have expected him to say something more definite about its reception than is implied in this remark. But, **as he saw fit to omit all mention of the enterprise, we are at liberty to infer, from the glad reception given to the messengers, that the gift they bore was also welcome.**

The main object of Paul's visit and of his prayers was now accomplished.

He had finished this much of his course and his ministry with joy, and his heart was relieved from its chief anxiety. Whether the Lord would now accept his prayer for deliverance from the disobedient in Jerusalem, he felt to be a matter of minor importance.

vv.18–26. After the general statement that they were gladly received by the brethren, Luke proceeds to state more in detail what followed. (18) *“And on the day following, Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. (19) And having saluted them, he related particularly what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. (20) When they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said to him, You see, brother,*

how many thousands of Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous for the law. (21) Now they heard concerning you, that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles apostasy from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, nor to walk according to the customs. (22) What, then, is it? The multitude must by all means come together; for they will hear that you have come. (23) Do this, therefore, which we tell you. We have here four men who have a vow upon them. (24) Take them, and purify yourself with them, and bear the expenses for them, in order that they may shear their heads, and all may know that those things of which they have heard concerning you are nothing; but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. (25) But as respects the Gentiles who have believed, we have already written, having decided that they observe no such things, only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication. (26) Then Paul took the men, and the next day went with them into the temple purified, announcing the fulfilling of the days of purification, when an offering should be offered for each one of them.”

This I confess to be the most difficult passage in Acts to fully understand, and to reconcile with the teaching of Paul on the subject of the Mosaic law.

We shall have the exact state of the question before our minds, by inquiring, *first*, What was the exact position of the Jerusalem brethren in reference to the law? *second*, What had Paul actually taught upon the subject? and, *third*, How can the course pursued by both be reconciled to the mature apostolic teaching?

First. It is stated, in this speech, of which James was doubtless the author, that the disciples about Jerusalem were “all zealous for the law.” They recognized the authority of Moses as still binding; for they complained that Paul taught “apostasy from Moses.” The specifications of this apostasy were, *first*, neglect of circumcision; *second*, abandonment of “the customs.” By “the customs” are meant those imposed by the law, among which, as seen in their proposition to Paul, were the Nazarite vows, with their burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and meat-offerings, and, as seen in Paul's epistles, abstinence from unclean meats, and the observance of Sabbath-days, holy days, new moons, and Sabbatic years.

Second. Our iniquity into Paul's teaching on the subject must have separate reference to what he had taught before this time, and what he taught subsequently. None of his oral teachings on the subject are preserved by Luke, hence we are dependent for a knowledge of his present teaching upon those of his epistles which were written previous to this time. In none of the specifications above enumerated did he fully agree with his Jewish brethren. True, he granted the perpetuity of circumcision; yet not because he acknowledged with them the continued authority of the law, but because of the covenant with Abraham which preceded the law. **As for the law, he taught that it had been “a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith, but after faith is come, we are no longer under the schoolmaster;” that, “now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that in which we were held;” that we are “become dead to the law by the body of Christ.” In repudiating the authority of the law, he necessarily repudiated all obligation to observe “the customs.”**

In reference to all these, he afterward said to the Colossians, that God had “blotted out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.” “Let no man, therefore, judge you in food or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of Sabbaths; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is Christ.” While thus repudiating the obligation to observe the ordinances, he admitted the innocence of their observance, and forbade any breach of fellowship on account of it, laying down in reference to them all, this rule: “Let not him who eats, despise him who eats not; and let not him who eats not, judge him who eats.” In reference, therefore, to *meats* and *days*, he and the judaizers agreed that the Jews might observe them; and they differed as to the *ground* of this conclusion: the latter affirming that it was a matter of duty; the former holding that it was a matter of indifference.

Thus far we have omitted special mention of one custom, because its importance demands for it a separate consideration.

We refer to **sacrifices**. It is evident, from the transaction before us, as observed above, that James and the brethren in Jerusalem regarded the offering of sacrifices as at least innocent; for they approved the course of the four Nazarites, and urged Paul to join with them in the service, though it required them to offer sacrifices, and even *sin-offerings*.

They could not, indeed, very well avoid this opinion, since they admitted the continued authority of the Mosaic law. Though disagreeing with them as to the ground of their opinion, as in reference to the other customs, Paul evidently admitted the opinion itself, for he adopted their advice, and paid the expense of the sacrifices which the four Nazarites offered.

Third. The commentators uniformly agree that Paul was right, and that the rites observed on this occasion are to be referred to that class which are indifferent, and in reference to which Paul acted upon the principle of being a Jew to the Jew, that he might win the Jew. This would not be objectionable, if the proceeding had reference merely to meats and drinks, holy days, etc., to which it appears to be confined in their view; for all these were indifferent then, and are not less so at the present day. Who would say that it would now be sinful to abstain from certain meats, and observe certain days as holy? But it is far different with bloody sacrifices. **If disciples, either Jewish or Gentile, should now assemble in Jerusalem, construct an altar, appoint a priesthood, and offer sin-offerings, they could but be regarded as apostates from Christ.** But why should it be regarded as a crime now, if it was innocent then?

The truth is, that, up to this time, Paul had written nothing which directly conflicted with the service of the altar, and he did not yet understand the subject correctly. His mind, and those of all the brethren, were as yet in much the same condition on this subject that they were before the conversion of Cornelius, in reference to the reception of the uncircumcised into the Church. If we admit that the proposition above quoted from Galatians, affirming that “we are no longer under the law,” was, when fully

understood, inconsistent with the continuance of the sacrifice, we make his case only the more likely like Peter's in regard to the Gentiles; for he announced propositions, on Pentecost, which were inconsistent with his subsequent course, until he was made to better understand the force of his own words. Peter finally discovered that he was wrong in that matter, and **Paul at length discovered that he was wrong, in his connection with the offerings of these Nazarites. Some years later, the whole question concerning the Aaronic priesthood and animal sacrifices was thrust more distinctly upon his mind, and the Holy Spirit made to him a more distinct revelation of the truth upon the subject, and caused him to develop it to the Churches, in Ephesians, Colossians, and especially in Hebrews. In the last-named Epistle, written during his imprisonment in Rome, he exhibited the utter inefficiency of animal sacrifices; the sacrifice of Christ, once for all, as the only sufficient sin-offering; and the abrogation of the Aaronic priesthood by that of Christ, who was now the only high priest and mediator between God and man.**

After these developments, he could not, for any earthly consideration, have repeated the transaction with the Nazarites; for it would have been to insult the great High Priest over the house of God, by presenting, before a human priest, an offering which could not take away sin, and which would proclaim the insufficiency of the blood of the atonement.

We conclude, therefore, that the procedure described in the text was inconsistent with the truth as finally developed by the apostles, but not with so much of it as was then understood by

Paul. **This conclusion presents but another proof that the Holy Spirit, in leading the apostles “into the truth,” did so by a gradual development running through a series of years.**

When Paul finally was enabled to understand and develop the whole truth on this subject, no doubt the opinions and prejudices of the more liberal class of Jewish disciples yielded to his clear and conclusive arguments. But, doubtless, some still clung to the obsolete and unlawful service of the temple, assisting the unbelieving Jews to perpetuate it. **Then came in the necessity for the destruction of their temple and city, so that it should be impossible for them to longer offer sacrifices which had been superseded.**

Quote:

The destruction of the temple was not the legal termination of the Mosaic ritual; for it ceased to be legal with the death of Christ; but this brought to an end its illegal continuance.

Before we dismiss this passage, there are two more points claiming a moment's attention. First, the justness of the accusation which the brethren had heard against Paul. He had certainly taught the Jews that they were no longer *under* the law, and that “the customs” were no longer *binding*, and this was, in one sense, “apostasy from Moses.” But he had not, as he was charged, taught them to *abandon* the customs; for he had insisted that they were innocent; and, in reference to circumcision, he had given no ground of offense whatever. Hence the charge, as understood by those who preferred it, was

false; and it was with the utmost propriety that Paul consented to disabuse their minds, though the means he adopted for that purpose was improper.

The last point claiming attention is the nature of the purification which Paul underwent. The statement which we have rendered, he “purified himself with them,” is understood, by some commentators, to mean that he took part in their vow of abstinence. But for this meaning of the term, *agnizo*, there is no authority in the New Testament; everywhere else it means to *purify*, and Paul's own statement to Felix, that “they found me *purified* in the temple,” in which he speaks of the same event, and uses the same word, is conclusive as to its meaning here.

It will be remembered that no Jew who, like Paul, had been mingling with Gentiles, and disregarding the ceremonial cleanness of the law, was permitted to enter the outer court of the temple without being *purified*. This purification he must have undergone, and there is no evidence that he underwent any other.

But it is said that he purified himself “with them,” which shows that they, too, were unclean. Now, when a Nazarite became unclean within the period of his vow, it was necessary that he should *purify* himself, *shear his head* on the *seventh* day, and on the *eighth* day bring certain offerings. Then he lost the days of his vow which had preceded the uncleanness, and had to begin the count anew from the day that the offering was presented.

This is fully stated in the [sixth chapter of Numbers](#), where the law of Nazarite is prescribed.

Such was the condition of these Nazarites, as is further proved by the notice given of the “days of purification,” and the mention, in the [next verse](#) below, of “*the seven days*,” as of a period well known. Nazarites had no purification to perform except when they became *unclean* during their vow; and there was no period of *seven days* connected with their vow, except in the instance just mentioned. In this instance, as the head was to be sheared on the seventh day, and the offerings presented on the eighth, there were just seven whole days employed. Paul's part was to give notice to the priest of the beginning of these days, and to pay the expenses of the offerings; but he had to purify himself before he went in for this purpose.

vv.27–30. (27) “*Now when the seven days were about to be completed, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, aroused the whole multitude, and laid hands on him, (28) crying out, Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, and the law and this place, and has even brought Greeks into the temple, and polluted this holy place. (29) For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, whom they thought Paul had brought into the temple. (30) And the whole city was moved, and the people ran together, and seizing Paul, dragged him out of the temple; and the doors were immediately closed.*”

If Paul's own brethren in Jerusalem has become prejudiced against him on account of his teaching in reference to the law, it is not surprising that the hatred of the unbelieving Jews toward him should be intense.

Their treasured wrath was like a magazine, ready to explode the moment a match should be applied; and to charge him with

defiling the holy place, which they believed that he had already *reviled* in every nation, was enough to produce the explosion. **It is not the custom of mobs to investigate the charges heaped upon their victims**; hence, without knowing or caring to know, whether he had really brought Trophimus into the temple, they seized him and dragged him out into the court of the Gentiles. The doors of the inner court were closed, to prevent the defilement of that holy place by the blood which was likely to be shed.

vv.31–34. For the second time in his history the Roman authorities came to Paul's rescue from the hands of his countrymen. (31) *“And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the chiliarch of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in an uproar, (32) who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down upon them. And when they saw the chiliarch and the soldiers, they quit striking Paul. (33) Then the chiliarch drew near and seized him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and inquired who he was, and what he had done. (34) But some of the multitude cried out one thing, and some another; and not being able to know the certainty on account of the tumult, he commanded him to be led into the castle.”* The inability of the mob to agree upon any charge against him shows the precipitancy with which they had rushed upon him, while the multiplicity of charges which they vociferated shows the intensity of their hatred. The chiliarch was indifferent through total ignorance of the case, and desired to act prudently; hence he determined to protect the prisoner, and hold him for examination under more favorable circumstances.

vv. 35–39. It was but a short distance to the castle of Antonia, which overlooked the temple inclosure, and was connected with it by a stairway. Thither the apostle was rapidly borne, the mob pressing after him. (35) *“And when he was on the stairs, he was borne by the soldiers, on account of the violence of the multitude. (36) For the crowd of people followed, crying out, Away with him!”*

- A Commentary on Acts of Apostles

Acts 21:17-36 (ESV)

I. Warm Welcome

¹⁷ *When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly.*

- Tie back into the context of last week...
- See the “completion” in arriving in Jerusalem
 - God fulfilled His promise(s)
 - The “mission” of unifying relief given
- See “the brothers” as (again) “1 FAMILY!”
- See “received us gladly” via:
 - Paul & posse arrive with \$\$\$ offering...
 - Paul & posse understood to be brothers
 - Paul & posse rightly/righteously received
- NOTE: there is NO mention of the \$\$\$ gifts???

II. Worshipful Welcome

¹⁸ *On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.*

- See the continuation & unfolding of God's plan
- Note the parallel to Acts 15's Jerusalem Counsel
- See the major shift/dynamic implied herein:
 - Early in Acts J-Church run by Apostles
 - Now... Apostles living out Acts 1:8
 - Others out "witnessing"
 - Local
 - Regional
 - Global
 - James already martyred
 - Deacon Stephen also martyred
 - Jerusalem Church now lead by Elders
 - Paul gives us the best example
 - Sent out by the Spirit
 - Supported by others
 - Speak "truth in love"
 - Serve by discipling
 - Show "faithful" obedience
 - Send out to multiply
 - See 1 & 2 Timothy
 - See Titus (next)
 - Note the spiritual dynamics:
 - Respect
 - Relationship

■ Reverence

¹⁹ *After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.*

- “After greeting them” = Love comes first!
- “he related” = relational communication is key
- “related one by one”
 - Every single miracle is miraculous!
 - God is in the details...
 - God’s macro glory is in His micro stories!
 - Don’t be in too much of a hurry...
- “the things” = MIRACLES (big and “small”)
- “the things GOD had done”
 - Why bother telling the Church all this?
 - Authenticates the Miracles
 - Elevates the Messiah
 - Validates Mission/Missionary
 - See Paul’s holy humility
 - Paul’s story is a subset of God’s story!
 - Jesus said: “I will build My Church...”
- “among the gentiles” = the world’s “whosoever’s”
 - Paul knows the Church needs to be united
 - Paul knows the Jerusalem church is bias
 - See John 17:21ff
- “through his ministry”

- Luke/God is validating Paul's ministry
- Paul IS God's chosen Ambassador
- God has been working through Paul...
- Paul's fruit points to Paul's root... Jesus!

NOTE: mid way through v.20 there is a major topical & thematic shift taking place...

^{20a} And when they heard it, they glorified God.

- See the good heart of the Church's leadership
- See their healthy perspective in giving God glory
- "they glorified God"
 - They were more than appreciative...
 - They recognized the miraculous works...
 - They sought to elevate God's glory!

III. Worrisome Welcome

^{20b} And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law,

IV. The Lie / Confusion / Deception

²¹ and 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 our customs.

V. The Question / Concern

²² What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.

VI. The Mistake

^{23a} Do therefore what we tell you.

➤ Do what “we” tell you vs. what God tells you???

VII. The Pragmatic Compromise

***** Remember Abe & Sarah! *****

^{23b} *We have four men who are under a vow;*

^{24a} *take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads.*

VIII. The Cowardice Corner-Cutting

^{24b} *Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law.*

- **Why didn't James just declare the truth?**
- **See the heights & depths of Paul's humanity!**
 - As with Peter & Barnabas in the past
 - Yet, Paul is human as well (Romans 7)

IX. The Rationalization &

²⁵ *But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our 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.”*

X. The Humility & Humanity of Paul

²⁶ *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 one of them.*

XI. The Prophetic Persecution Begins

²⁷ *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,*

²⁸ *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 has defiled this holy place.”*

²⁹ *For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.*

³⁰ *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.*

XII. The Prophetic Intervention Begins

A. God's governmental agents of intervention

³¹ *And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.*

³² *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.*

B. Remember Agabus... "hands & feet" = 2 chains

³³ *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.*

C. Remember Jesus... see the parallel!!!

³⁴ *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.*

³⁵ *And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd,*

³⁶ *for the mob of the people followed, crying out, “Away with him!”*

CLOSE: What are our take-aways?

Sovereign no matter what...

- John the Baptist questioned...
- Jesus sweat drops of blood...
- Paul here, even after mistakes...
 - Beware “open theism”
 - Beware “rationalized division”
 - Sovereign over all our J.U.N.K.
 - J = Journey
 - U = Under attack
 - N = Near-sightedness
 - K = Killed

Let the LORD's will be done!

- What is the LORD's will?
 - The Incarnation
 - The Crucifixion
 - The Resurrection (a.k.a. "Gospel")
 - The Great Commandments
 - The Great Commission
- Paul's witness to God's will:
 - WORDS - proclaiming the Gospel
 - WALK - "No matter what!" (2 Cor.11:25ff)
 - Jesus = "show & tell"
 - Paul = "show & tell"
 - Acts Church = "show & tell"
 - Average church???
 - Our church: (share like Paul)
 - Local, Regional, Global
 - Acts 1:8 & Mt 28:18-20
 - Luke 10 & 2 Timothy 2
 - Look around you!
 - Ekklesia in koinoni
 - Born Again friends
 - Born Again P.o.P.
 - Friends of P.o.P.
 - Christ-like ministry
 - Personal "D3"
 - Stepping Stones
 - Carter Center
 - Witzit Center

- Choices Pregnancy
- Crossroads Comm.
- Mustard Seed
- Thrift store
- China church plants
- A.P.Y.
- Ugandan diversity
- Southern India
- Indian Ocean

■

○ You & Me???

■ WORSHIP (John 14:15 & 20:21)

Notes on Glorifying the LORD:

Glorify God by All You Do

We actually can glorify God by what we do. We can also bring shame to the name of Christ if we claim to be a believer and do not live up to our calling. Paul understood that what we do either glorifies God, glorifies ourselves or brings shame to His holy name. Paul said that *"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God"* (1 Cor 10:31). When Paul said *"whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."* That means that whatever we do, whether serve, pray or give, we must keep in mind that our chief purpose is to glorify God. Since we *"were bought at a price [we ought to] Therefore honor God with your bodies"* (1 Cor 6:20). Our bodies can glorify God by what our bodies do. By doing what? *"Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."* John 15:8 makes it plain that *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."* When we are *"Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are to the praise of his glory"* then we glorify His name (Phil 1:11). In 2 Corinthians 9:13 it says that God can be glorified *"Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else."*

Paul was consumed by the desire to glorify God as he said, *"I eagerly expect and hope that*

I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death" (Phil 1:20). So we can glorify God by whatever we do and exalt Him in our bodies by our acts of obedience, our selfless acts of service, our willingness to witness, and in our actions. When our bodies labor to do service to Him we glorify Jesus and exalt His name. Our labors of *love* must be aimed at glorifying Him. In fact, if any ministries are done without the purpose of glorifying Jesus, then we toil in vain and we are uselessly only exalting ourselves. God will never prosper a work of His unless it necessarily exalts Jesus Christ. You might as well save your time for you will be building a ministry of wood, hay, and stubble which will all burn up at the judgment seat of Christ.

Jesus clearly said to "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16). We are not saved by works but for works and these works ascribe glory and praise to God. How good is that!? Peter said that we are to "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Pet 2:12). The pagans are those who are not Christians and if they can glorify God by our deeds and words on the Day of visitation. Since these deeds are credited to God's honor, how important it is that we do good works? When Achan disobeyed God, Joshua told him to "give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and honor him and make confession to him" (Joshua 7:19). By confessing our sins and faults we can glorify God. To confess our sins means that we agree with God about the deep sinfulness of our sins.

David was overwhelmed by God's goodness. In a Psalm of praise, David proclaimed (likely by song), "Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness" (Psalm 29:1-2). The Psalms are brim full of praise to God. David ascribed to the Lord "the glory due his name" and the "splendor of his holiness." "*Whosoever offers praise glorifies me*" (Psalm 50:23). The Psalmist again says, "*I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever*" (Psalm 86:12).

"It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture" (Psalm 100:3). God did not have to create us nor was He under any obligation to save us, yet He did. Why not glorify our maker? Even the "*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands*" (Psalm 19:10).