

Part 53 Paul In Jerusalem

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, Oct. 12, 2016

† Acts 21:15-32

Last Wednesday we looked at the first 14 verses of this chapter which covered Paul's travels from Miletus to Jerusalem and then his first few days when he arrived in Palestine and stayed in the home of Philip the Evangelist. We discussed Philip's 4 daughters that had the gift of prophecy and we also looked at the prophecy of the Prophet Agabus who foretold of Paul's impending arrest.

Tonight we pick up after Paul and his team leave Philip's house in Caesarea and head to Jerusalem.

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

The traveling distance from Caesarea to Jerusalem is around 65-miles. It says they "took up our carriages." The word "carriages," was not used in the way that we use it today. This word translates more to the word "luggage," or "baggage," for us today. Don't think that they all had their own horse drawn carriages and they climbed aboard and drove to Jerusalem. No, they most likely walked the distance carrying everything they had.

16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

This man Mnason owns a home in Jerusalem. He is originally from Cyprus. His name is not a Jewish name, it is a Gentile name, but he is Christian and has been for a long time. It says he was "an old disciple," meaning he has been a disciple for a long time. He is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible but this one time we are given the privilege to know this dear old disciple who was willing to lodge the Apostle Paul in his home and travel with him as well. What a testimony for the Lord to mention your name in the inspired text.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

It is good to see that Paul and his men were received gladly by the other believers in Jerusalem. They have been gone a very long time and it was probably a joyous occasion for them to see them again, and of course, to receive the offerings that they brought.

18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. 19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

The next day, Paul meets with the Church leaders of Jerusalem. Notice that it names "James," specifically. This implies that James was what you would consider the head or Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem. We've already talked about him in our earlier studies, especially when we covered the Jerusalem council where they met to determine whether or not the Gentiles would have to undergo circumcision and James presided over the council.

This James is not James the son of Zebedee, brother to John, this is actually James the half-brother of Jesus. He is named over in the Gospel of **Mark 6:3: Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.**

Paul relates all of his past travels and ministry and places emphasis on how the Lord was working in the lives of the Gentiles.

20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

It is hard to say how many Christians there were by this time. There has been around 25-years passed since Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost and the 3,000 were saved. Of course we read in the beginning of the Book of Acts how God had multiplied the believers and the Church so by this time there were thousands upon thousands of believers.

These Jewish believers, however, are still keeping the law. They were still observing the dietary laws and circumcision and such. It was a hard thing for them to break considering that God instituted it with them.

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

The Jews have been told that Paul has been preaching that they should stop following the laws because Christ fulfilled the law. Paul did defend the grace of God but he was not an enemy to Moses and the Law. He did stress to the Gentiles that this was not necessary to keep the law but he wasn't out there stirring up things with the Jews about it. In fact, you may recall that he had Timothy circumcised so that he would be able to be a better witness before the Jews and to be accepted by them.

But of course this is what the Jews wanted to focus upon. You can guarantee the ones that were stirring all of this up were the Judaizers. Those that did believe that Jesus was their promised Messiah but were also teaching that you were to still keep the law and the traditions and customs. They were always stirring things up for Paul. They were so engrained in their Hebrew laws, customs, and traditions that it was hard, if not impossible to break them. But Paul didn't stress this toward the Jews, only the Gentiles.

Before we give these Jews a hard time we have to consider how difficult it must have been to think about changing the way you have done things all of your life and all of your ancestors before you. It would be like telling Baptists that we were no longer to eat fried Chicken or hold a homecoming every year. That is what we do, it is engrained in us. If someone told me that I had to stop doing the things that Baptists do I would have a hard time with it.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

The Church leaders sense that it Paul's presence in Jerusalem is going to be a problem with those Jews that oppose his teaching and preaching and when they find out he is there trouble will ensue. To them, Paul is a traitor to the Jewish race. He was one of them and now he is not.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; 24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

The Church leaders come up with a plan for when the trouble starts. They want Paul to be seen following the Jewish laws, traditions, and customs. So they advise him to go to the Temple with these four men that have vows on them and take a part in it so that all of the Jews will take notice and then say, “hmm, maybe this Paul fellow isn’t so bad after all. He is still practicing our Jewish ways.” This vow was most likely the Nazerite vow that we studied about a few weeks ago. Remember a Nazarite vow has nothing to do with the place called Nazarene.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

Of course we have already studied what the Jerusalem council is referring to here. That was covered in Chapter 15 which started with this: [Acts 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.](#)

Remember that the Jerusalem council made a decision that the Gentiles were not bound to follow the law and the Jewish customs and traditions. Nothing was said about the Jews not still doing them, only the Gentiles.

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

So, Paul takes the advice of the Jerusalem council and goes into the Temple with these four men and participates in their vows.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

Paul and the men complete their 7 days that required of the vow. Suddenly some Jews that had traveled to Jerusalem to worship, recognized Paul in the temple and boy, they really stirred up trouble. So much for the council’s plan... I want you to take notice of something very important here, the trouble, the strife, came from within the Church, not outside. Which is usually the case when there is Church problems.

Last night someone came to me and said, “***I guess you’ve heard about the mess going on over at _____.***” I looked at him and said, “***No, and I don’t want to know.***” I went on to say that people needed to quit talking when something happens. More damage is done by the gossipers than anything. I would venture to say that 90% of Church splits happened because of people running their mouth instead of praying. It is our flesh that causes us to get involved in things like that. Gossip is juicy. Right now some of you are probably wondering which Church it was that this person was talking about. Hey, it’s our human nature to be that way so we have to constantly be on guard.

But these Jews from Asia are the ones stirring up trouble. Paul hasn’t hurt anyone. He hasn’t damaged the Church or other believers. Yet they take it upon themselves to cause trouble. No one asked them their opinions.

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

Wow, they are really zealous in their trouble stirring. They are accusing Paul of all kinds of things that he hasn’t done. “***Men of Israel, help!***” Wow...

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

There was a Gentile court and an Israelite court at the Temple. The Gentiles were not allowed into the Israelite court. These Jews saw Paul with one of his men, Trophimus and assumed that he had brought him into the temple of the Jews. How dare he!

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

It doesn’t take much to get a full riot worked up. It says that “all the city was moved.” Everyone in the city has been affected by this one way or another. It has turned into pure pandemonium. It must have looked like Charlotte, NC when those riots broke out a few weeks ago.

They grab Paul and pull him out of the temple and slammed the doors shut. It is clear that they thought more about their building and their traditions than they did the preaching of the Gospel. That same mindset is prevalent in Churches all across the land today. People get compassionate about their buildings and their traditions. If you trespass on either one you might as well expect a full on riot.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

Let those words sink in, “***they went about to kill him.***” Religious folks, about to kill the preacher. They have no thought about murdering someone, that is nothing compared to what Paul has done, supposedly bringing a Greek into the Jewish temple!

Thankfully the Lord uses the Roman government to save Paul’s life. Like I said in the message Sunday, the Lord uses those that we think to be the worst. He used Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, and Titus in the life of his people to accomplish his plans. Here he is using the Romans to save Paul for a while.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

Let’s not forget about the prophecy of Agabus that we studied last week.

[Acts 21:10-11](#) And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

Just like Agabus prophesied, Paul was bound and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.

I want to end here tonight and we will pick back up on the rest of this next Wednesday, Lord willing.

†ⁱ All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible