

ACTS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Acts chapter 21 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Keep in mind that Paul is finishing up his third missionary journey, heading to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost.

And the main reason he was so set on getting to Jerusalem is that Paul had a passion for the Jews. He wanted them to come to saving faith in their Savior, Jesus Christ. He wanted them to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Yes, his primary ministry was to the Gentiles, but, as the Lord said to Ananias regarding the ministry of Paul, “**. . . ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.’**” Acts 9:15-16.

So, Paul is on his way to Jerusalem to witness to the children of Israel about Jesus!

As we concluded last time we saw that the ship that Paul was on docked in Miletus. And there in Miletus Paul calls for the elders of the Ephesian church to come down and see him.

Paul felt this would be his last time he would see these men, these leaders of the church, so he wants to exhort them in the work, to follow his example of ministry.

He exhorted them to teach “**the whole counsel of God**” and not hold back. To oversee the church that God has entrusted to them.

And then the warning, **“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”** Acts 20:29-31.

Paul’s warning to the Ephesian church back then is a warning to us today. We need to be careful because there are wolves out there that want to devour the sheep that God has entrusted to leaders in the church today.

Not only wolves from outside the church, but from within and not only will they bring in false doctrine, but they will draw the people to themselves. Paul warned them, and the Holy Spirit is warning us to be careful of these false teachers and false doctrines that are coming into the church!

Now, there are many warnings that people ignore, they don’t pay attention to or just don’t care because it feeds into their flesh or it just doesn’t affect them personally.

Keep in mind that Jesus warned us that in the last days deception would increase and the only way to battle deception is with the truth of God’s Word. And yet, people are ignoring those warnings today.

Remember back on January 28, 1986, the Challenger space shuttle exploded over the skies of Florida while being watched by millions of people on the ground and on live television.

What happened? What caused the explosion? The explosion was caused by the formation of ice around the space shuttle’s O-rings, which were used to separate the rocket boosters from the shuttle.

Were there any warnings of trouble with these O-rings? Of course, there were warnings. This time, they came from Bob Ebeling, an engineer who worked for the company that produced the booster.

He had warned that the extremely cold weather would prevent the O-rings from sealing properly and would cause an explosion. He and another engineer then requested that the shuttle's launch be delayed until the weather was favorable. The delay was initially granted but was later dismissed by executives, who were under pressure to get the shuttle into the space, as the launch had already been delayed six days.

When Bob complained, one of the executives told him that the *Challenger* was "not his burden to bear."

The shuttle took off against Bob's insistence only to explode in midair 73 seconds after takeoff.

Seven astronauts, one of whom was a teacher who had won a seat on a NASA educational program, were killed in the accident.

That is tragic because there was the warning and I believe it is also tragic that we see the warnings that God has given to us in His Word being ignored and thus, we see the church embrace all kinds of eastern mysticism, new age teachings, psychobabble and a host of other unbiblical false doctrines. And the reality is, they are nothing more than doctrines of demons because they are not of God!

We need to pay attention to the warning so that our Christian walk will not go astray!

Now tonight, as we get into Acts chapter 21, we will see Paul being warned about the dangers he is facing in Jerusalem. Remember what he told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:24, **“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”**

Paul understood the danger and yet, his love for the Jewish people was more important to him than his own life. Nothing was going to move Paul away from the course that God had for him!

As Paul finished encouraging the Ephesian elders, and warning them, we are told in Acts 20:36-38, **“And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.”**

That is where we will pick-up our study this evening, in Acts chapter 21, beginning in verse 1, and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

ACTS 21

VERSES 1-2

Paul had a hard time leaving the Ephesian elders because he loved them so much and they loved him. In fact, the word **“departed”** or **“parted”** means “to tear away.”

Paul spent some three years with them in Ephesus, and now this brief encounter, maybe never seeing them again on this earth, made it very difficult to say good-bye.

The deep love they had for each other is clearly seen as they kissed Paul good-bye and wept knowing chains and tribulations await him in Jerusalem, and that is not a good thing!

As they set sail they were probably on a small boat because it hugged the coastline from one little island to another.

Cos was some 45 miles away from Miletus. Then, from Cos, Rhodes was some 70 miles and then Patara another 70 miles.

As they got to Patara there was a large port there for large ships to unload their cargo to be transported to the various destinations in Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey.

And, here in Patara they will board a larger ship and head for Phoenicia, Tyre and Sidon or modern-day Lebanon, some 400 miles away!

And, as we will see, the warnings to Paul about what awaits him in Jerusalem are going to begin.

VERSES 3-4

Not only did the larger ships sail in the Mediterranean Sea, not just along the coasts, but here we see that it took them seven days to unload the cargo from this ship. That must have been a good size ship for them to take that long to unload it!

So Paul, having some time in Tyre, goes looking for believers. Now the big question to me is, "When were these churches started?" I think that is a good question, don't you?

Well, we know that they were not started by Paul, but I do believe he may have had a role in starting them.

What I mean by that is if you remember the persecution that Paul brought against believers after Stephen was martyred for his faith. Believers fled Jerusalem for their lives, and in doing so, the communities they ran to came to Jesus by their witness. So Paul did have a role in that most likely!

So as Paul comes to Tyre, he searches out and finds these believers, not to persecute them now, but for fellowship with them!

Never forget that. No matter where you go in the **WORLD**, we have fellow believers, we have a family that we can fellowship with!

We are also told that these believers gave this warning to Paul, “**... They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.**” Acts 21:4.

As some read what is spoken of here and other warnings about Paul going to Jerusalem and Paul not heeding the warning, they feel that Paul was out of the will of God on this one. They feel he was ignoring what the Holy Spirit was showing him.

Make no mistake about it, Paul was not perfect, he was just a man. But I don't believe that is the case here. I don't believe that Paul hardened his heart to the Holy Spirit.

I believe the disciples in Tyre knew the warning given by the Holy Spirit, and their love for Paul made them come to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit was telling Paul not to go.

Remember in Acts chapter 9, after Paul's conversion and the Lord told Ananias to go and see Paul. And we are told that the Lord gave Ananias these words, “**But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.'**” Acts 9:15-16.

Paul did suffer tremendous persecution for his faith in Christ and what was awaiting him in Jerusalem was no different.

Also, Paul said in Acts 20:22-23, “**And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.**”

The Spirit was leading Paul and warned him what was coming and for these believers, they would rather see Paul spared from this persecution, this trouble and thus, they told him not to go.

We also see in Acts 23:11 the Lord tell Paul, “**. . . ‘Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.’**”

The Lord does not rebuke Paul for going to Jerusalem but is encouraging him that just as he witnessed about the Lord in Jerusalem, he will have a witness in Rome as well. And I guess you can say that just as he was persecuted for his faith in Jerusalem, he will be persecuted in Rome and in that is his witness!

So I truly believe that Paul was led by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem and also the Holy Spirit warned him that trouble was also awaiting him there, but Paul had such a passion for his brethren that none of these things moved him from completing the work that God called him to do.

We might call that courageous commitment that stemmed from strong convictions he had! He loved the Lord and his love for the Lord caused him to love people and want them to come to saving faith, and nothing was going to stop him from witnessing to them!

VERSES 5-6

Despite the heartfelt pleas of the Christians of Tyre, Paul and his group did not turn away from going to Jerusalem. He was persuaded it was God's will, so they continued.

What I love here is that these believers accompanied Paul to the ship and before he boarded, they knelt down together and prayed. What love they have for each other and it reminds me of what Jesus said in John 13:34-35, "**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**"

If this love is missing in your life. If you are critical of others, putting people down, how does that fit in with what Jesus said? It doesn't, and you need to do a heart check. These believers loved each other, and it was manifested not just in words, but actions!

Also, on the beach where many gathered to say good-bye to their loved ones who were boarding this ship, as well as this group of believers, with Paul. And, as I have said, they knelt down with Paul and prayed. What a witness that must have been!

Now you may be thinking, "How can we do that?" It is simple, when you go out to restaurants, pray over your meal, you don't know who is watching you? At family gatherings, ask if you could pray over the meal, and-so-on. Be a witness; don't change what you do at home when you go out!

What I also want you to take note of is that their family time was not something that was outside the church, set apart from other believers, but their family time was among the brethren.

Today, some would say, "We needed some family time, so we stayed home from church!"

Not these believers! They felt it was too important to stay away. It is so important that our children, and our grandchildren should see how important it is for us to gather together with other believers and worship God and study His Word. May they see the love we have in coming to church and that it is not some burden, but joy to gather together. These families lived what they said they believed!

VERSE 7

From Tyre they headed some twenty-five miles south to Ptolemais, which was a seaport city. Today it is located near Haifa and is called Akko (Acre).

And they spend one day in Ptolemais and it gives Paul a chance to meet with the local brethren, believers!

Sometimes we just read through these verses and miss what is being said.

Wherever Paul stopped, he was able to meet with fellow Christians and what a wonderful thing that is!

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, written around 60-61 A. D. from Rome, said, **“We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.”**

Colossians 1:3-6.

Think about that for a minute. Within some 30 to 40 years the Gospel message went out through the whole known world and today it continues to go out!

VERSES 8-9

Keep in mind that this is not the apostle Philip but the one we met in Acts chapter 6 who was appointed as a deacon in the church to help distribute the welfare program to the Hellenist believers.

From there God called him to go and witness to the Samaritans and then to an Ethiopian eunuch before he came to Caesarea to settle down with his family.

And after some 20 years, he is still walking with the Lord as well as his daughters who had the gift of prophecy.

VERSES 10-14

This is the same Agabus we read about in Acts chapter 11 who prophesied of a great famine coming upon the land, which occurred.

Here, as was often the practice of the Old Testament prophets, he play-acts what is going to happen to Paul when he arrives in Jerusalem.

Paul was going to be bound by the Jews and handed over to the Gentiles, which is going to take place shortly!

This was of God, but the response of the people, well, that was based on emotion, their love for Paul. We are told, “**And when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.**” Acts 21:12.

Not only do we see the people of Caesarea pleading with Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but Luke and the others who were traveling with Paul did not want him to go either!

Emotions can cause us to stop what God wants us to do and here other believers were getting in the way of God's will for Paul. And that is why I believe we see over and over again the Holy Spirit confirming to Paul what he was to do!

And I think we can all understand their feelings. Think about it, we do that for ourselves and our family, trying to protect them.

Several years ago there was a news story of a couple who wanted to create a safe and secure environment for their children. Nothing wrong with that, it seems very logical.

So they moved to the outskirts of San Francisco – three weeks before the San Francisco earthquake hit the Bay Area.

During this earthquake their house, half of it collapsed, causing them, logically, to say “We can't live here. Our family is in danger.”

So they moved from California, all the way to Florida where no earthquakes will touch them.

They moved into their home five weeks before Hurricane Andrew flattened their home!

Distraught, devastated, as you can imagine, obviously upset about this, they decided to go on a vacation to get away from it all, and they went to Hawaii – two days before Hurricane Iniki wiped out their hotel!

Let me be clear on this. The safest place to be is in the will of God and the most dangerous place to be is outside His will!

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 6:31-34, **“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”**

You see, we need to seek the will of God in the situations we face in life. And sometimes it will be tough, you will face much opposition, but you do the will of God and in that you will find the blessing. It may not be easy, the situation may be intense, but it is where God wants you to be and where else do you want to go?

And Paul’s response is bold, and he is not letting his emotions drive him but the Lord to led him. He said, **“... ‘What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’”**
Acts 21:13.

That was the heart of Paul, the love of God constrains him, compels him to walk in the Spirit, (II Corinthians 5:14).

Nothing is going to move Paul from the course that God has set for him. Paul, from prison in Rome was able to say, **“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”** May that be the passion of our heart, “Lord, I will go where you lead me!”

And we see that when the disciples, including Luke, could not persuade Paul from going to Jerusalem, they gave it to God and said, **“The will of the Lord be done.”**

That my friends is the secret to the believers rest, give it to God and rest in Him and then we can have the peace of God in our lives as we commit these things to Him!

This is not a fatalistic attitude or a “Whatever will be will be!” mentality here.

The thing is, why strive with God, surrender to Him and His will for your life, it is what is best, and we can rest in that.

As Oswald Chambers put it, “To choose to suffer means that there is something wrong; to choose God’s will even if it means suffering is a very different thing. No healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he chooses God’s will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not.” (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, p. 223)

VERSES 15-17

From Caesarea to Jerusalem was about a 65-mile journey, some three days on foot, and thus, this ends Paul’s third missionary journey.

It appears that Paul made it to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. And being one of the three main feasts that Jews were to attend, Jerusalem must have been filled with people. I think that is one of the reasons Paul wanted to be there during one of the feasts, all the Jews he could share Christ with.

Now, in Jerusalem, Paul fellowshiped with the believers there and there was joy and gladness as they fellowshiped, as it should be!

VERSES 18-19

Paul and the other disciples meet with James, the leader in the church in Jerusalem and Paul shares with them all that God had done with the Gentiles, how they came to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior and how these churches were growing and maturing in the Lord.

Paul gave them a full report of his work and what God was doing with the Gentiles!

Not only that but Paul gave to the church in Jerusalem the gift from the Gentile churches to help them out in the needs they had.

What great news! And yet, there is a ***BUT*** and that is not a good thing as we shall see!

VERSES 20-22

So the church in Jerusalem was excited to hear what God was doing among the Gentiles, ***BUT*** they also had a concern for what they were hearing about Paul, that he was forsaking what Moses said, to not circumcise their children or to walk according to the customs.

These were those Christians who loved the Lord but also were zealous for the Law!

First of all, Paul didn't do what they accused him of unless these things were held as a basis for salvation.

Paul said in Romans chapter 10, **“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’”** Romans 10:9-13.

You see, we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone! Anything that we add to grace is works, anything we add to the finished work on Calvary is works, and it won't save you!

It is as Paul said in Galatians 2:21, **“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”**

I believe that Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews and it may have been in regard to this encounter here with the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. I think that this is the motivation for him to write Hebrews.

Think about what Paul wrote in Hebrews! He is telling them that they can't go back to the old sacrificial system, they can't hold onto those traditions for salvation because they won't save them! They are all pictures pointing us to Christ and now that the substance is here, Jesus has come, why go back to the pictures which are lifeless? It makes no sense. The work is finished by Jesus and anything you try to add will not make it better, it will not cause God to love you more, but you will cheapen grace!

The sad thing about all of this is that it wasn't until the city and the Temple were destroyed by the Romans in 70 A. D. that these traditions ceased!

So James and the elders in Jerusalem are concerned that trouble is going to arise by the zealots of the Law who think Paul is saying these things.

But remember, God said that chains and tribulations are awaiting Paul in Jerusalem! What is their solution to this problem? Let's read on and see.

VERSES 23-25

Their solution to this problem is to have Paul sponsor four men who had taken probably the Nazirite vow of consecration and to pay for their sacrificial expenses.

Now there was the burnt offering that spoke of consecration unto God, Paul could have offered that.

There was the peace offering which spoke of communion with God, and Paul could have offered that also.

There was the sin offering which I don't believe Paul would offer because Jesus, our Passover Lamb, already paid for all of our sins on the cross of Calvary.

In fact, Paul in Hebrews chapter 9 speaks of the Tabernacle and the sacrifices as being symbolic of Christ and what He was to do and did.

He tells us **“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”** Hebrews 9:11-15.

It is as Clarke said, “He had shown them that their ceremonies were useless but not destructive; that they were only dangerous when they depended on them for salvation.”

I don't believe that Paul is going to compromise his faith here, but he is placating these Jewish believers who had a hard time letting go of the Law and also trying to open a door to the Jewish non-believers, so he may share Christ with them.

Paul's motivation behind his actions is clearly given to us in I Corinthians 9:19-23, "**For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law(not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.**"

And let me be clear on this. This does not mean the Jews kept the Law to be saved.

In fact, Peter makes that point very clear at the first Jerusalem council church meeting as he said, "**Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.**" Acts 15:10-11.

Peter is saying that the Gentiles are not saved by the Law, the Law that the Jews themselves could not keep, but they are saved by grace and thus, the Jews are saved just the same as the Gentiles, by Grace!

A powerful statement by Peter!

But like back then, people today rely on rituals to save them and that is a dangerous place to be because rituals don't save you, Jesus does!

VERSE 26

Again, Paul's desire was to not offend the Jews so that he may speak of Jesus to them. This was not a salvation issue but a fellowship one, it dealt with a door to speak to them about Jesus!

It says that Paul made an offering, what kind? I'm sure Paul did not offer a sin offering, for he would later point out very clearly that Jesus Christ is the ultimate offering for sin. But he did probably offer one of the other offerings that spoke not of atonement but of fellowship.

While I commend Paul's flexibility, I am grieved by the church's frailty. The Jerusalem church was not as powerful as the church in other regions during this period because they were still caught up in traditionalism and compromise.

VERSES 27-30

Paul did not look for trouble, but it seemed to find him wherever he went! As Paul is in the Temple area, Jews from the Roman province of Asia, unbelieving Jews, stir up the crowds against Paul with lies. Keep in mind it is Pentecost and thus, many Jews have gathered in Jerusalem from far away to celebrate this feast, including these Jews from Asia.

For some reason they assumed that Paul allowed a Gentile, Trophimus from Ephesus to come into the Temple, and that was not allowed.

You see, Gentiles were only allowed to go as far as the outer court, the court of the Gentiles. If they went any further, they could be put to death!

In fact, on the Temple grounds signs were posted which read, in both Greek and Latin, ***“No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught trespassing will bear personal responsibility for his ensuing death.”***

The Romans were so sensitive to this that they authorized the Jews to execute anyone that offended in this way, even if the offender was a Roman citizen.

Then, in the Temple area, beyond the court of the Gentiles was the court of the Women, then the court of the Men, then the Sanctuary where the priest could go and then the Holy of Holies where the High Priest could enter only once a year on Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement and only after a ceremonial cleansing!

And even then, on his leg they would tie a rope and there were bells on his robe just in case he was unclean and not able to approach God in the Holy of Holies. And, if the bells stopped ringing they would pull him out, for they did not want to enter in the presence of God in their own righteousness which are like filthy rags!

But Luke tells us that this statement was not true about Paul, they assumed Paul did this, but he didn't. And think about that for a minute, Paul goes through this ceremonial cleansing, he is sponsoring these men so he can talk to the Jews about Jesus, and then he does this? No way!

Now in speaking of the Holy of Holies, the place where God dwelt, when Jesus died on the cross of Calvary we are told that the veil that separated man from God was torn in two, from top to bottom, signifying that the way to God has been opened for all to come to Him through Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and man!

It is as Hebrews 4:16 tells us, **“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”** The door is open through Jesus, He is the perfect sacrifice that the Father accepted for our sins!

Now, because it was the Feast of Pentecost, Jerusalem could have swelled to over two-million people who came for this Feast, and as these men from Asia stir the people up, they grab Paul, take him out of the Temple area and close the doors, probably in the court of the Gentiles now.

And they are ready to kill Paul now! Traditions of men make people do strange things. And it is amazing how they will fight, put down, destroy lives for their traditions and in doing so, they are fighting against God!

VERSES 31-32

Make no mistake about it, Rome would not tolerate this kind of activity and they knew if trouble would arise in Jerusalem, especially during the Feast days, it would be around the Temple area.

Because of that the Romans built the Fortress of Antonia on the northwest corner of the Temple Mount and in there were Roman soldiers who were only two flights away from the court of the Gentiles.

This commander who was responsible for this area was Claudius Lysias according to Acts 23:26, and the word “**commander**” in the Greek speaks of being in charge of 1,000 soldiers.

Claudius took the Centurions who were in charge of 100 men each, and here it is in the plural which tells us that he took at least 200 soldiers, maybe more with him to stop this riot and rescue Paul!

As soon as the Jews saw the Roman soldiers coming they stopped beating Paul!

Now here is something for you to think about. Where was the church in all of this? Where was the church that asked Paul to support these four men in this purification and consecration ritual?

Paul is in trouble and they are nowhere to be found!

And it is interesting to me that the Roman soldiers rescue Paul, not the church!

Make no mistake about it, that is what happens when a church, when a person allows legalism and compromise to gain control of their lives!

Lost is the commitment and the energy to bring forth the Good News and it is replaced with traditions and rituals and the church, the individual's become the "Frozen Chosen!"

Let us not become like that but have a passion for the lost and for our brothers and sisters in the Lord that when they are in trouble, we are there to help them, not ignore them or cheering on their demise!

"Lord, don't let us care more about external regulations and forms than we do about love, commitment, and standing by one another when someone's getting beaten up."

It's a tragic commentary that in Jerusalem, it was the Romans rather than the Christians who rescued Paul, as I have said!

VERSES 33-36

As Paul is arrested by the Roman soldiers, I guess he was rescued by them, they are trying to figure out what he did that lead the crowds to mob him and beat him.

And as this commander, Claudius Lysias asks what happened, the crowds begin to shout so he couldn't hear what the charges were as everyone was speaking what they thought happened.

So as the crowds are worked up again, they try to bring Paul into the barracks, the Fortress of Antonia, and they have to carry him in because the Jews are still trying to get at him to kill him!

Yes, the Jews were passionate, but they were also wrong. We need to be careful that we don't let the crowds influence our actions, but we let the Lord guide us in all that we do. This is an ugly scene, and again, where is the church in Jerusalem in all of this? They are nowhere to be found!

VERSES 37-39

You have to love Paul, he is almost beaten to death, his life is in jeopardy, and he wants to still share Jesus with this mob of angry Jews. He just never gives up because none of these things move him from the course that is set for his life! He knows that he is in the hand of God and no one will be able to touch him unless God allows it!

And Lysias was surprised the Paul could speak Greek. You see, the Greek language was the language of cultured, educated men, not common criminals such as he assumed Paul to be.

Lysias's next question revealed his wrong assumption of who his prisoner was as he said, **“Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago raised an insurrection and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?”** Acts 21:38.

Lysias wrongly assumes that Paul was the Egyptian rebel who in around 54 A. D. had a following of some 4,000 people who gathered on the Mount of Olives because he claimed to have power to break down the walls of Jerusalem.

When the Roman soldiers saw what was happening, they attacked these people, killing some, arresting others, and this Egyptian got away! Now Claudius thinks Paul is the man and he is back in town causing trouble once again!

Lysias also described the Egyptian's followers as Assassins. The Assassins were a terrorist group that emerged during Felix's term as governor. Their strong Jewish nationalism made them bitter enemies of both the Romans and Jewish collaborators.

Mingling with the crowds, they stabbed their victims. They would then either melt away into the crowd or brazenly join the mourners to escape detection.

The Assassins were especially active during the Jewish festivals, such as Pentecost. Lysias no doubt assumed the crowd had caught one of them (maybe even the Egyptian himself) in the act of murder.

But Paul tells this commander that he is not this Egyptian and gives proof by telling Lysias where he is from.

He identified himself to Lysias as a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city. As a Jew, he had every right to have been where he was in the Temple.

Now, having identified himself to Lysias, Paul courageously requested permission to speak to the people.

Although battered, bruised, and in chains, the apostle did not think of his own safety and comfort.

Instead, his passionate desire was to see his countrymen saved. And that passion drove him to seize the opportunity to recount his conversion to the crowd. It is as Paul said in Romans 10:1, "**Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.**"

VERSE 40

Again, Paul had this courageous commitment that stemmed from his strong convictions and his desire is to see his fellow Jews saved!

And as Paul quiets this unruly mob down, he begins to speak to them in the Hebrew dialect or in Aramaic, the language of the day for the Jew, and we will see next time what Paul has to say and the results of what he had to say to them.

As I close, I pray we have that boldness, that passion for the lost and we will not let various things move us from the course that God has set for our lives!

As Paul has said, **“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”** Acts 20:24.

Herod's Temple

