

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 21 –

Let's pray...

[Act 21:15-40 NKJV] 15 And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. 16 Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.

So at the end of our study last week, we found Paul and the gang up in Caesarea.

That is where they stayed a few days with Philip –

That is where the prophet Agabus showed up and gave a prophetic word through a visual demonstration of what was going to happen to Paul in Jerusalem –

And you might remember that everyone was telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem – but

they couldn't change his mind – because he was determined to go to Jerusalem

because he understood it was God's will that he go – and if it was God's will for him to

suffer in Jerusalem, he was still going to go.

So here in the beginning of our text this evening, Luke tells us that they leave Caesarea and that more disciples tagged along with them.

One of those individuals – Mnason, was an early disciple.

This means that he had been a believer from the early days of the church.

You see, about 20-25 years have passed from Acts 2 to Acts 21

So, Mnason joins them and the significance of this is that he has a home in Jerusalem, so Paul and the guys had a place to stay when they got there.

Church, as we study Paul's journey – one of the things we see over and over again is God providing for him – doors were opened, everywhere that the Holy Spirit guided him.

Whether it was Philip's house or Tyre or Jerusalem – we see God's provision and we also see the hospitality of those in Christ.

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

So, Paul arrives in Jerusalem and he and the guys receive a warm reception from those in the church in Jerusalem.

So far – so good.

Until you realize one of the reasons that they welcomed them with open arms.

What was one of the reasons that Paul was in a hurry to show up to Jerusalem?

He was bringing financial aid that the churches in Macedonia and Greece had collected for the needy in the church in Jerusalem.

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

Now, notice that only James is mentioned. BTW, this is the half-brother of Jesus

There is no mention of Peter or John or any of the other apostles.

It's possible that by this time, they were all out spreading the gospel throughout the world.

And James is the overseer of the church in Jerusalem.

19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

So, when Paul meets James and the elders – Luke tells us that he told them in detail.

In detail translates to words that indicate Paul went point-by-point describing God's amazing work among the Gentiles.

It was everything we've been reading about in Acts for the past couple of weeks –

Everything that happened in Ephesus, in Corinth, in Philippi, in Berea and other places.

All the miracles that took place.

He told them about how many turned to the Lord.

And he told them in great detail – remember, a lot of the stuff that Luke tells us – he wasn't even there, he gathered the info from someone else.

I had you make a note that Paul told them the things that **God had done**.

Church, we serve. God works.

The best we can ever do is to learn to serve God and others.

The real, lasting work in the lives of the people we serve is done by God, not us.

20 And when they heard [it], they glorified the Lord.

Pause right there -

I had you make a note of the way they reacted to what Paul told them

Turn with me to Matt 5,

This is Jesus speaking -

[Mat 5:16 NKJV] 16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

This is exactly what Paul is doing here, sharing what God has done as he's served.

And the result of that - is that the Lord is glorified.

How could they not glorify the Lord after everything that Paul told them that the Lord had done?

Notice – Paul makes sure that God gets the glory!!!

And we should make sure that we follow Paul's footsteps.

So everything is good so far.

Look at the second part of verse 20,

And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many **myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; 21 "but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise [their] children nor to walk according to the customs.**

So after glorifying God, James and the elders – they turn to Paul and pretty much tell him.

“We have a problem here Paul – we have many myriads (a myriad is 10,000 – so many myriad is many 10k's) of Jews who are now believers.”

Now - That in itself is a good thing.

However – here is the bad part, they continued to adhere to many of the Jewish laws and customs.

Remember, Paul had been teaching the believers that righteousness comes by faith in Jesus Christ – apart from the law.

But those within the church in Jerusalem – they were still trying to do it through their own works.

If that was not bad enough,

They then inform Paul that there are rumors / there is gossiping that he has been teaching the Jews to stop following the Laws of Moses.

First of all, Paul never taught the Jews to stop following the Law of Moses.

He taught the opposite

[1Co 9:20-21 NKJV] 20 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; 21 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;

Nowhere did Paul tell the Jews that it was wrong for them to practice their customs, as long as they didn't think that observing their custom made them more right before God.

You want to continue to follow a kosher diet – go for it

You want to circumcise your son – go for it

You want to observe the Sabbath – go for it.

But don't think that by doing this – this will show how righteous you are.

I think the sad part in all this is the failure of the leadership in the church in Jerusalem.

1. First they allowed the Judaizers – those that taught that the believers needed to continue to adhere to the Law in order to be saved – they had a great influence among the church in Jerusalem
2. The second failure is that it appears that they didn't do anything to quench the rumors that were being spread among the church in Jerusalem.

So, here after telling Paul the bad news, they tell him of their plan.

Think about this, they had time to come up with a plan but didn't have time to stop the rumors from spreading.

22 "What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. 23 "Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. 24 "Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave [their] heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but [that] you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.

So the plan of James and the elders is for Paul to sponsor these four individuals and pay the cost of their vow.

This most likely was a Nazarite vow – and if you read Numbers 6, we looked at it a few weeks ago, you will see that it could be expensive.

There were different types of offerings that had to be made – Paul now had to pay for the offerings of the four men.

Now, the reasoning behind this is that if the Christian Jews see Paul doing this – then they would think that Paul was still keeping the law and observing the traditions.

25 "But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written [and] decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from [things] offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."

The leadership of the church affirmed, here in verse twenty-five, that it was not at all necessary to keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved. (This was done back in Ch 15)

But if Jews wanted to continue in their rituals they were not discouraged

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

So Paul goes along with it.

He goes through the entire ritual.

And many theologians point out that Paul compromised on his belief here.

However, I think Paul did it to help them.

We looked at Paul letter to the church in Corinth earlier –

[1Co 9:22-23 NKJV] 22 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. 23 Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with [you].

This is what Paul is doing here, he is becoming weak, he is identifying with them.

He is reaching out to them where they are – not looking down on them.

27 Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him,

These Jews from Asia – were most likely the ones that Paul encountered in Ephesus.

These were the ones that stirred up the crowds there.

What are they doing in Jerusalem? Remember, there is a feast going on.

They see Paul, they recognize him and I had you make a note that they laid hands on him – this is different than the laying of hands that we had seen previously by the elders in Antioch.

This was a laying of hands with the intent to injure.

28 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all [men] everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also 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, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

So, these Jews from Ephesus – they grab a hold of Paul, and they bring up accusations against Paul.

And what is interesting as you study the scriptures is that they bring up the same charges against Paul that were brought up against Stephen back in Acts 6 -

[Act 6:13 NKJV] 13 They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law;

And one of the things they accuse Paul of doing was defiling the temple.

[Show Map](#)

Gentile Court – Gentiles were allowed there.

This is the place where Jesus overturned the tables of the money exchangers – and one of the reasons He was upset was that they were occupying the space reserved for the Gentiles –

Now, these Jews from Asia, they are accusing Paul of taking a Gentile into the temple.

The thing is – that no one saw him doing it. It was all an assumption.

Luke tells us that they had seen Trophimes hanging out with Paul in the city – so they assumed that Paul took him into the temple.

30 And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. 31 Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

So Paul is in the temple mount, there is a mob trying to kill him.

He is one man against a mob

They have closed the gate to the temple – I had you make a note of that.

What stopped the mob from killing Paul?

1. God's providence
2. news came to the commander – how did news come to the commander while the temple gates were closed? God found a way. He provided a messenger to go and deliver the necessary news to bring the soldiers in. By the way, we find the name of the commander in chapter 23.

You might ask yourself –

Why not send an angel?

Why not open up the ground and swallow this angry mob?

Well, knowing the rest of the story we know that God's desire was to put Paul before governors and kings.

To inspire him to write more epistles.

To use him as a missionary among many Roman military men.

In other words, God was not done using Paul.

32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

So the commander leads his men into the temple mount – and once they enter the gates, the people stopped beating on Paul –

They knew that if they would continue to beat him – the Roman soldiers would start swinging the swords at them.

They were responsible for keeping the peace at the temple mount.

33 Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded [him] to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done.

Now, before we go on –

We see that Paul was arrested – why was Paul arrested? Why not the mob?

In our study last week, remember the prophetic word that Agabus gave at Philip's house?

Look at verse 11

[Act 21:11 NKJV] 11 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his [own] hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver [him] into the hands of the Gentiles.' "

Agabus said he would be bound and then he was bound

But someone might say, but Agabus also said the Jews would bind him.

The Roman soldiers bound Paul –

And the answer to that was that it was the actions of the Jews that resulted in the binding of Paul.

34 And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. 35 When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"

So as Paul is shackled, they are leading him away and then the mob start to push their way to get a hold of Paul.

It got so bad that the soldiers had to carry Paul

37 Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek? 38 "Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?" 39 But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."

At this moment, when his life was in danger from an angry mob and he was suspected of being a dangerous criminal, Paul had one thing on his mind:

He is in an elevated position at the top of the stairs

He sees the thousands of Jews below

And he makes one request -

"Let me preach the gospel to my fellow Jews!"

40 So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to [them] in the Hebrew language, saying,

Your translation may say “Hebrew” there at the end. Scholars say that the text says, “he addressed them in the Hebrew dialect,” which would’ve been Aramaic at the time.

We see one more does of providence here.

God gave Paul inexplicable favor with the commander and then supernaturally drew the attention of a multitude onto one man.

A great hush fell over the crowd.

Even during injustice and persecution God was fighting on behalf of His servant.

Sudden deliverance wasn’t going to arrive, sudden revival wasn’t going to break out.

But God had not failed.

And Paul was not disheartened. The work continued.

The world may come against us, blame us, misunderstand us, accuse us of things that aren’t true, assume the worst of us. That’s to be expected. And it’s ok, because we can show them the truth by our love and our grace. And, whether we “win” in court or not, we can be sure that God is still on our side, He’s still on the move and He’s still sending us out in power to do what we can to rescue those that need rescuing.

Let’s pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'