

Acts
“Jesus” The Sequel
III.) Chp. 13-28 “Witnesses to the end of the earth”

Chp. 18:22-28 The royal route to Rome (3rd trip)

21:17-40

“Do what we tell you”

I.) Intro.

II.) Vs. 17-26 Free in freedom

III.) Vs. 27-40 Misunderstood mission

I.) Intro.

I came across these real life miss understandings in Church bulletin bloopers the other day:

- “*Wait Watchers meeting next Thursday at 6 pm please enter through the side double doors.”*
- “*Don’t let worry kill you off – let our Church help!”*
- “*A bean super will be held on Tuesday at 6 pm in the fellowship hall, music to follow!”*
- “*Ladies, don’t forget the garage sale. It’s a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands!”*
- “*Please welcome our visiting Pastor, a caring individual who loves hurting people!”*

Paul arrived in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost as he followed the will of God knowing full well that trouble awaited him. The trouble that awaited him was from believers as well as unbelievers. We shall see how Paul handles being **misunderstood** by fellow Christians then we will see how this led to his being **misunderstood** by nonbelievers.

Robert Jacks, a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, wrote a book called “*Just say the Word*”. He tells the story of a Pastor who spoke on the truths of Love, peace and grace with little or no response. Puzzled by the lack enthusiasm in the audience he inquired from the pulpit what the matter was, to which someone blurted out, “*It’s not what you said, it was how it was said!*” Sometimes people will misunderstand you even when what you say was said correctly.

II.) Vs. 17-26 Free in freedom

Background:

Paul’s ministry is about to go through a major readjustment. Up to this time he has primarily been reaching un-reached gentiles, boldly taking the word of God into areas where it had never gone. Paul is now back into a Jewish and Jewish Christian area which Luke will spend the next six chapters on, (approximately 200 verses) where he tells us of five trials and five separate defenses Paul makes all because of the events in this chapter. The question is: “Why does Luke spend so much time on this part of Paul’s life?”

- Luke is a historian and based upon the use of the word “we” he was present during this time and gathered much of the information he needed to write Acts as well as the gospel that bears his name.
- In Paul’s defenses (*Before the Jewish crowd in the temple, the Jewish council, Felix then Festus and finally before King Herod*) he espouses many truths of Christ which we would not have had recorded if Luke did not spend so much time on this part of Paul’s life.
- Yet I still see another reason for spending so much time on this part of his life, it is here that we see the truths of Christ displayed in a life that is under captivity.

Last week we saw Paul follow the will of God even though he knew that the outcome was chains and tribulations. But the question remains “**What happens to a person’s faith in Jesus when life becomes a prison sentence?**” “Will Paul’s freedom in and through Christ be that which imprisons him?” Luke records for us that Paul, like Jesus, is truly free. Jesus said, “I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” Freedom is on display in the life of Paul who shows that he is truly free because he is not enslaved to his freedom, he is enslaved only to Jesus. Jeremiah 23:10 says, “I know, O LORD, **that a man’s life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.**”

Have you ever felt that where you are at in life is a prison sentence? You experience feelings of confinement as you want to go a certain direction but were unable to get there. It is here that you will find that it is your very freedom that is keeping you from being free. Jesus told us in John 8:36, “if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” ***It is the Son that makes you free!*** Just prior to saying this Jesus told us that freedom is defined and experienced only in an abiding relationship with Him. **Folk’s if you’re struggling where you’re at in life it’s because you are seeing life defined in your situation instead of seeing life defined in your abiding relationship with Jesus!**

Vs. 17-20a There are three things that drove Paul to Jerusalem:

- a. Acts 19:21 The holy Spirit had laid it upon his heart.
- b. Paul was bringing an offering. Luke does not mention this here but in chapter 24:17 Paul said this in his 3rd defense before Felix, “after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation.” So that was one of the reasons for his desire to come to Jerusalem.

- c. The final reason Paul came, we are told in 21:19, was to “tell them in detail the things God had done among the gentiles.”

In verse 17 when we read that “*When they had come to Jerusalem the brethren received them gladly*”, it was most likely then that Paul presented the Jewish brothers the love gift! On the following day Paul and his entourage goes into see James the ½ brother of Jesus now the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. Notice the wording here, “*he told in detail*” that’s literally “told them every single thing”. Paul shared not what he had done but rather what God had done through him. He wanted to make sure that the believers in Jerusalem knew that God was the One that ought to receive the praise for the work. It is clear that they did not misunderstand Paul’s words concerning the ministry to the gentiles as we are told in verse 20 that “*when they heard it, they glorified the Lord.*”

Paul shared both financially and spiritual the blessings of God from Gentile believers and the response was “*the brethren received gladly and they glorified the Lord.*”

Vs. 20b-24 James and the gang says, “*thanks and praise God, **BUT** I have a request to make! Before James makes his request to Paul he wants to let him know the reasoning why.*

- a. Many myriads of Jews have believed: The word “*myriads*” is literally tens of thousands. James say’s, “*Well God has been doing some great things around here as well Paul lots of Jews have turned too their messiah Jesus as well.*”
- b. They are zealous for the law: Literally the Greek says, “They are zealots for the law”. James says, “*We have got them out of the law but we have not yet*

got the law out of them.” They no longer saw the law as the basis of their salvation but they were still observing its customs.

- c. **They have been informed about you:** The word “*informed*” here is a very revealing one as it is the word where we get our English word “**catechism**”. Webster defines this word as “*A form of instruction by means of questions and answers*”. These new Jewish Christians had been drilled lies about Paul and his ministry.

Then James tells Paul the **threefold lie** they had been told saying that Paul taught, “*all the Jews who are among the Gentiles.*”

- a. “*To forsake Moses*” **CULTURE**: Paul did not teach the Jews to forsake their ethnic **culture**. He taught them the same as James that **a person is not saved on the basis of their culture.**
- b. “*Not to circumcise their children*” **CEREMONY**: Paul did not teach that a person should not circumcise their child but **rather that an outward ceremony did not change the heart, only faith in Jesus can do that, which James agreed.**
- c. “*Nor to walk according to the customs*” **CUSTOMS**: Neither of them taught that it was wrong to have certain **customs. They taught that a person’s faith is seen in walking in the righteousness of Christ not walking in the customs of our ancestors.**
- James and Paul agreed that Gentiles could be saved apart from first becoming Jews.

- They also agreed about the importance of keeping the moral law or living a holy life.
- The issue was over whether or not Jewish believers should continue to practice their customs. ***The rumor that was being spread was that Paul was against them practicing their culture.***

James says, in verse 22 “What then?” Which is to ask Paul; “What can we do to counter act the false opinions about your ministry?” “Take these four fellows to the temple, pay for their expenses, and while your at it take the vow of purification that you are suppose to do when you come back from Gentile lands.” James wants Paul to do this so that he would still look like a good Jewish boy.

Vs. 25-26 James wants to make sure that Paul does not misunderstand him concerning the Gentiles by saying “we have written and decided” already concerning them. It is interesting to me that **James wanted to make sure that he was not misunderstood with the Gentile believers present but still wanted Paul to prove that the lies about him were not true.** I’m blown away by Paul’s response here in verse 26 because you see I know what my flesh would have said to James. “James, you know what I’ll have no problem doing what you ask **BUT** you know I don’t think Luke believes what you’ve just said about not observing all those things so why not join them in having a ham sandwich!” **Paul was willing to make a concession in the areas of practice for the sake of others conscience!**

III.) Vs. 27-40 Misunderstood mission

Vs. 27-29 For several days Paul goes in and out of the temple showing the Jewish believers that he is still a good Jewish boy until just about the time when his time was up

some of the Jews from Asia spot him. Based upon the fact that they recognized Trophimus (*well educated or well brought up*) we know that they were from Ephesus. Here we are told they accused Paul of teaching all men everywhere against three things none of which was true:

- a. **The people** “*Doesn’t like you!*”
- b. The law or **the practice** “*Doesn’t like what you do!*”
- c. **The place** “*Doesn’t like where you do it!*”

They accused Paul of demonstrating the above three things because “*he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.*” Paul had not done that nor would he have and if he had why did they not kill Trophimus. There was a stone wall 4 ½ feet high and 2 ½ feet wide that separated the court of the Gentiles from the Holy Place. At regular intervals there was written this inscription which was upheld by the Romans “*No Gentile shall enter within the partition and barrier surrounding the temple and whoever is caught shall be responsible to himself, for his subsequent death.*” They found one of these inscriptions on the temple mount in 1935. It was this wall that Paul was speaking of in Ephesians 2:14 where he wrote that “*He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has **broken down the middle wall of separation***”.

Vs. 30-40 Look at how the Lord protected Paul but not through the Jewish believers in whom he had made his concession for their consciences but through the Romans. The fortress of Antonia is right on part of the temple wall and overlooks the temple area so when they shut the doors and started beating Paul some of the Roman guards spotted the disturbance and came with several hundred soldiers to rescue him. In Acts 23:26 we are told that the commander was Claudius Lysias. The mob was so bad that they had to pick

Paul up and carry him to the stairs even with the presence of two hundred or better armed Roman soldiers. We are told that they thought that Paul was a Egyptian false prophet who three years earlier had gotten together several thousand followers then went over to the Mount of Olives saying that at his command the walls of Jerusalem were going to fall down and they could go in a defeat the Romans. The Romans got wind of it and killed most of them but the Egyptian had escaped and they thought that was Paul until he spoke Greek. Paul was able to convince him that he is not the false prophet and motions to speak before this crowd that seeks to kill him. Were going to stop here but I want to leave here this morning with the image of Paul and the shouts of those saying “*away with him or kill him*”. **Paul had no problem laying aside his freedoms for truth but he would never lay aside the truth for freedom!** May we so live today in the liberty of Christ as “freed men and women” it’s only then that we show the world that we are truly free!