

"The Third Missionary Journey"

Part 17

Acts 18:23-21:26

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we were with Paul toward the end of his third missionary journey and his companions were trying to keep Paul from going to Jerusalem. There was a prophet named Agabus who showed up and he prophesied that Paul would be bound by the Jews and handed over to the Gentiles in Jerusalem. Paul however was not convinced to avoid Jerusalem because he was fully convinced that it was the will of God for him to go. Paul would not take the path of least resistance but he would remain in the will of God no matter the situation. Therefore, those with Paul surrendered and asked for the will of God to be done.

Notice Acts 21:10-14

This now brings us to where we stopped.

➤ **On to Jerusalem**

Notice Acts 21:15-16

Here in verse 16, we meet another individual. His name is Mnason and we are told that he was an old disciple with whom they lodged. We are not given much information about Mnason but we can gather a few thoughts from the fact that he lodged Paul and his companions. This man was hospitable as he opened his home. We also can understand that he was not critical in his old age. There were many rumors being spread about Paul as we shall see in the following verses. But Mnason did not have a critical spirit. He was able to adjust and accept the younger disciples even though they did things differently. Mnason desired to advance the ministry for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Application:

There is a danger for all of us as we grow older to develop a critical spirit and to become critical of those who are coming behind us. We have talked about this before but we need to be reminded again that as we grow older, we can grow better or we can grow bitter. We must learn to be people of encouragement to those who are coming behind us. We must be

there to correct them when they are in error and we must be there to walk along beside them as they serve because to be in the ministry is a spiritual battle. It is so easy to become discouraged in the middle of the spiritual battle. Mnason was devoted to God in his later years and this should be our goal also. Just because we get older in age does not mean that we will automatically grow spiritually stronger. Many in the later years have fallen into sin. It can be the sin of a critical spirit or it can be any sin.

1 Kings 11:4-8

⁴ For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

⁶ And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father.

⁷ Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

⁸ And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

God can use us as we grow older. He uses our wisdom, prayer, hospitality, encouragement and often our finances are needed in the body of Christ. At every age, a person must seek the will of God, submit to the will of God, and do the will of God. One man prayed the following words as he moved into the latter years.

"Lord, let me have true devotion to you in my latter years, and don't let me be negative, bitter, critical and hard as I move on in years."

Notice Acts 21:17

This shows us how time changes many things. The first time (20 years earlier) Paul came to Jerusalem the disciples wanted nothing to do with him.

Acts 9:26

²⁶ *And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.*

Notice Acts 21:18

Paul and his company then went in to visit James, the half-brother of the Lord. The elders were also there but not the Apostles. Why? Most likely they were out fulfilling the Great Commission.

Acts 1:6-8

⁶ *When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*

⁷ *And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.*

⁸ *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

Notice Acts 21:19

Here is a very important verse for us to consider. Paul testified of all that God had done through him. He did not testify about what he had done because Paul had not accomplished anything on his own. He was simply a conduit through which the Lord worked through. This was Paul usual pattern.

Acts 14:26-27

²⁶ *And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.*

²⁷ *And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.*

Acts 15:4, 12

⁴ And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

¹² Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

Paul always gave the glory to God for the good that was done.

1 Corinthians 15:9-10

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Application:

Let us be reminded that when we see people helped, encouraged, comforted, or saved through our ministry, it is not we who have made the difference but it is the power of God in and through us. We too are just channels through which God works.

John 15:1-5

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

² Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

³ Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

⁵ I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Notice Acts 21:20

There are several points to see in this verse. First of all we see that when the elders heard how God worked through Paul that they glorified the Lord. They praised God and were rejoicing.

Application:

How do we respond when we hear of God working through other believers? Notice the words of an unnamed writer.

"The response of the Jerusalem elders is perfect pattern to practice - when others experience spiritual fruit in their ministry, we are not to become jealous or envious, but instead should give all the glory to God. You can't be jealous and give God glory! That's a divided heart. Jealousy is sin and sin quenches the Spirit Who enables us to give glory to God from a whole heart. This recalls Paul's instruction to the gifted but a bit jaded Corinthian church declaring that "if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Cor 12:26) This begs the question - How do you handle the spiritual success of other saints?"

Christianity is not a competition. We are all in this together and we are all of the same family and army. We are together in this spiritual battle to glorify God.

Notice Acts 21:20 again.

It is believed that at this time there was somewhere between 20-50,000 believing Jews in Jerusalem. Many of them were zealous for the Law. This then brings up a question, "Why were the zealous for the Law when the believer is dead to the Law?" Let us keep in mind that this letter is transitional. The Jews who were saved are coming out of Judaism. Notice the words of Warren Wiersbe.

"He asks '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."

Notice Acts 21:21

The rumors that had spread about Paul were not correct. They said that he told Jews to forsake Moses' teaching and he forbade any Jews to circumcise their children. Paul did not teach these things. He taught that no one was saved by the Law and he taught that circumcision was not required for salvation or to belong to the church. He never told them to forsake the Law nor that they could not circumcise their children. Paul taught the value of the Law that it was our school master to bring us to Jesus Christ.

Notice Acts 21:22

This situation had the potential of getting completely out of control. It was like a powder keg next to a fire. The elders did not believe the charges against Paul but they believed they needed to do something to calm the situation.

Conclusion:

Again, we see Satan distorting the Truth in an attempt to stop Paul from going further with the Gospel.

2 Timothy 3:12

¹² *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

God will use the events that follow to place Paul in Rome where he will share the Gospel in areas that it had not been known.