

"The Third Missionary Journey"

Part 18

Acts 18:23-21:26

Introduction: When we stopped several weeks back in our study, we were looking at the lies that were told about Paul. Paul had come to Jerusalem and was accepted by James and the elders. They were the ones who told Paul what the Jews were saying about him.

Notice Acts 21:17-22

James and the elders believed they needed a plan to protect Paul.

➤ **The Plan**

Notice Acts 21:23-24

To show that Paul was not against the Law he was to join up with the 4 men that were under a vow. He was to purify himself and pay the expenses which they would owe to the Lord. Notice the words of Arnold on the expenses.

"When the days of the vow were completed, he was to present an offering to God which consisted of two lambs, a ram, a basket of unleavened cakes and a libation of wine. The vow ended when the person shaved his head, burned his hair in the fire and offered the sacrifice. It took a good sum of money to buy two lambs and a ram, and many poor Jews did not have the money to buy these animals to offer in order to get out of the vow. However, it was permissible for a rich Jew to give money to buy these sacrificial animals for the poor Jews under a Nazarite vow."

Paul would need to purify himself because of his travels into the Gentile territory. Let us notice what God commanded concerning a Nazarite vow.

Numbers 6:2-6, 13-15

² *Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD:*

³ *He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried.*

⁴ *All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk.*

⁵ *All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.*

⁶ *All the days that he separateth himself unto the LORD he shall come at no dead body.*

¹³ *And this is the law of the Nazarite, when the days of his separation are fulfilled: he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation:*

¹⁴ *And he shall offer his offering unto the LORD, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings,*

¹⁵ *And a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings.*

These were the requirements. This was a vow of the highest honor. To enter into a Nazarite vow was to show one's dedication to the Lord. For Paul to join the four men and pay the expenses would show that Paul was not against the Law.

Notice Acts 21:24 again.

The hope was that all would know that the rumors that were being spread concerning Paul were nothing.

Notice Acts 21:25

This was a reminder concerning the Gentile believers.

Notice Acts 21:26

Paul did as he was instructed by James and the elders. The question then arises, "Was it wrong for Paul to do this?" Many believe he made a mistake here. Let me share some comments concerning what Paul did here.

G Campbell Morgan, *"This was the greatest mistake in the ministry of the Apostle Paul."*

A C Gaebelein, *"A strange sight to see him who taught deliverance from the Law submitting once more to the elementary things, as he calls them in his Epistle to the Galatians."*

Donald Grey Barnhouse, *"The picture we have here of the Apostle Paul was an opinionated, stubborn old man. The idea of a bald Paul offering sacrifices in the temple is just as ridiculous as if I were to go out into a Roman Catholic cathedral and accept the mass from a Roman Catholic priest."*

Others believe there was nothing wrong with what Paul did and I would agree. He was not promoting the Law as a means of justification or sanctification. Paul did not view the Law as something that was to be avoided. He actually saw the Law as something that was needed and it had a great purpose in the lives of unbelievers.

Romans 3:19-20

¹⁹ Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Galatians 3:23-25

²³ But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

²⁴ Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

²⁵ But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

What Paul did here in Acts can best be understood by what he wrote to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 9:20-22

²⁰ *And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;*

²¹ *To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.*

²² *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

Getting back to Acts, this then ends the third missionary journey.

➤ **Paul's Chains in Jerusalem**

Notice Acts 21:27

Paul was not known by face in Jerusalem. But at this Feast of Pentecost there were Jews from Asia who recognized him. How did they know Paul and where in Asia were they from?

Notice Acts 21:29

These Jews recognized Trophimus who was an Ephesian. This tells us these men knew Paul from the time when he was in Ephesus and he had been there three years. Most likely they were from Ephesus.

Notice Acts 21:28

In the Temple there was a section in the in the courtyard where the Gentiles could come. This section was separated by a wall from the area where the Jews could come. When the Jews saw Paul in the temple, they thought he had brought Trophimus with him beyond the court for the Gentiles. Let me show you what Paul wrote to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:13-14

¹³ *But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

¹⁴ *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;*

When Paul wrote this he was thinking of this wall. Getting back to the point in Acts they believed he had brought a Gentile beyond the Gentile court.

Notice Acts 21:30-36

Here in verse 36, we hear their words "away with him" and we are reminded that we have heard this before.

John 19:14-15

¹⁴ *And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!*

¹⁵ *But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.*

These were the same words spoken of Jesus. This brings to mind something that Paul wrote.

Philippians 3:10

¹⁰ *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;*

Notice Acts 21:37-39

I want to draw your attention to Paul's desire to speak to the very people who desired to kill him. Paul knew something that we often lose sight of.

Ephesians 6:11-12

¹¹ *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

¹² *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

Paul knew that behind these people Satan was at work to attack him. He also knew these people were accountable for their actions. It was his desire to share with them his personal testimony so that they too could hear the Gospel.

Application:

These people would be used by the Lord to get Paul where he desired to go and that was Rome. They would be held accountable for their actions as well. In this scene we see the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. We also see it in the death of our Savior.

Acts 2:22-24

²² *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:*

²³ *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*

²⁴ *Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.*

Genesis 45:7-8

⁷ *And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*

⁸ *So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.*

Conclusion:

Paul understood that this crowd was under demonic influence. It was mob mentality and he was able to overlook that and see people who needed Jesus Christ. This is how we should look at those who rise up against us. We too are in a spiritual battle. The people that rise up against us need Jesus Christ. Let us pray so that we will be able to see them through the eyes of Jesus Christ.

- ✓ Sometimes God uses unsaved people to get us to where He desires for us to be.