

# Acts 21\_pt2

by Bill Gallatin

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*Paul's desire to visit Jerusalem is driven by his love for Jesus Christ and his desire to share his faith with his Jewish brethren, despite the risks and warnings from others.*

**Duration:** 1:01:34

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:25, Luke 9:23, Acts 21:13-14, Acts 21:40, Galatians 2:20

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker highlights the power and anointing that Paul had when he stood before a riotous crowd. Despite the chaos and the inability of others to calm the people down, Paul fearlessly waved his hand and the crowd fell silent. This demonstrates the power and authority that comes from yielding oneself totally to God. The speaker emphasizes the importance of submitting one's will to God's plan and trusting in His power to accomplish great things. The sermon also highlights the irony of the weak church compromising to keep peace, while God uses the Gentile Roman government to protect and save His apostle.

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## Transcript

Verse 14 of Acts 21. Now, let's see, before vacation, we were into this last September. You remember, Paul is moving, going back to Jerusalem, desiring to make Pentecost.

He loved to be there, not so much that he was still bound by the Jewish feasts. It's been 20 years since his conversion, and his experience with the Lord with his great revelation in the Arabian desert, you know, personal revelation. You ever learn from man, remember, he said, I did not receive revelation from man, it was from the Lord.

And he'd already written Romans, Galatians, and 1st and 2nd Corinthians. So he knew, you know, that he wasn't bound by the Jewish rituals and law. That he was a new creature in Christ.

But he had this desire to be back there with the family and everything, members, friends, maybe fellow Pharisees that had not been converted, that had heard of what happened to him, just to share his faith. You remember in Romans chapter 9, he stated that he wished himself to be accursed. He loved his Jewish brethren so much.

He wanted them to experience Christ so much, just like you and I want our relatives to experience Christ so much. They don't understand that. They just see it as foolish fanaticism.

We're trying to push our religion on them, especially if they're still bound with their habits. And they don't realize the love and the joy and the experience of eternal life, of a forgiven conscience, sins being forgiven. So Paul said, I have such a burning desire, I could wish myself accursed from God for my brethren's sake.

If I would lose my salvation, I'm willing to give up my redemption, that the Jews might come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Well, only one person could give his life for redemption, and that's Jesus Christ. But Paul was sincerely saying that.

He had this burning desire. Now you remember Agabus, a friend of his, a prophet, saw as they were sitting around the campfire, eating pita bread and hummus and roast lamb with olive oil and butter. Oh man, hyssop, dipped in hyssop.

And he looked over, and the Holy Spirit showed him, you see, that Paul was going to suffer terribly. He got in the spirit, the spirit of prophecy, the word of knowledge. So he grabbed Paul's girdle, his waistband, that they carry their money and things in and cinch up their robes with.

He put it around himself and jumped up and he said, Thus saith the Lord, the man that this girdle belongs to, if he goes to Jerusalem will be beaten and suffer and all this. And man, as he said that, Luke and all the friends, they all got all concerned, you know, and they tried to talk Paul out of it. They said, Oh, can't do this.

It wasn't the Holy Spirit forbidding Paul to go, but just letting Paul know what was in front of him if he did go, to be aware of it. Now you remember when Paul met Jesus Christ, he had told Paul immediately when he sent him to Ananias, he said, Now, when you get there, I want you to go to this man's house, Ananias' name, and he'll pray for thee, and you'll be healed, and you'll be able to see, you'll receive your sight. And at the same time he's telling Paul this, to go to Damascus, the Holy Spirit's in a vision telling Ananias that there's a man Saul, the servant of the Lord, coming to you.

Remember Ananias said, Hey, you don't know what he's done to the church. He's wreaked havoc. I mean, he's coming to my house.

You want me to pray for him? He's been killing Christians. Remember the Lord said he's a chosen servant now, a chosen vessel for me. And I have shown him the things that he must suffer for my name's sake.

And so Ananias prayed for him, laid hands on him. And it's interesting, he was baptized in the Holy Spirit, but he didn't speak in tongues at that time. He had this separate experience, but he got a healing.

Remember the scales fell away from his eyes. He didn't get tongues until later on, but he was baptized and filled with the Spirit. And he didn't fall down.

He didn't act fanatic and start shrieking, jumping up and down or barking. You know, the Holy Spirit is that wonderful influence. The Holy Spirit's no different than God the Father and God the Son.

All three persons of the Godhead act identically. They're the same in perfect love, perfect peace. And so Paul received his healing.

And remember later he was driven into the desert. And here God took this man steeped in the law and took him from law to the beauty of grace. The wonder of God's grace, a revelation.

Now they loved him so much. It changed his life so much. There was so much grace and love in his message, in his teaching.

They fell in such love with him. They did not want Paul to go to Jerusalem, and so they all tried to talk him out of it. And he said, What mean ye to break my heart and cause me to weep? I'm willing to die for Jesus Christ.

As much as I love you, if I'm being led to Jerusalem for the salvation of others, I'm willing to die for Jesus Christ. And so they couldn't talk him out of it. In fact, he said, You're affecting my heart.

Your love for me is affecting my heart. But his love for Christ was greater than his love for his Christian friends. His desire, you see, because he was a servant.

He was a slave. His life was no longer his. It belonged to Jesus Christ.

And so this is what I find so wonderful, so quickly. And through this text, through the narrative, you always see we. Luke is including himself.

Luke is always involved in it. We this. We that.

Because he's the author. Remember, he's the eyewitness who's writing the account to the church. And in verse 14, he says, And when he could not be persuaded, we, in other words, Luke was involved in it, trying to stop him.

No, don't. Don't go. We don't want to see you beaten and suffer.

Now, none of them were worried about dying. Paul wasn't worried about dying. They weren't trying to stop him because they were afraid of their own lives or knowing that Paul was afraid of his.

They just didn't want the suffering. They did not want it to take place. But this is what I find so wonderful.

When he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. There's the spiritual depth and the maturity of them all at this point in their walk with the Lord said, The Lord's will be done. We're not going to try and twist your arm or talk you out of it or, you know, lay a condo trip on you to try and get our own way.

Now, they knew there's going to be brutality, suffering. And this is what I like. The very next verse.

They didn't say, Well, goodbye, Paul. We'll pray for you because we know there's going to be trouble down the road. We don't want to lose our, you know.

We're not going to, you know, stay in our own little environment to protect ourselves. We're in a comfort zone. That's fine.

Yeah, it's your call, Paul. We'll just stay here. We'll pray for you.

We know you're going to suffer. It might be difficult. You may not have enough money.

You may not get a job. You may not, we don't know, you may not have a house to live in, but we're not going to give ours up. We'll just stay.

We'll pray for you. We'll have a weekly prayer meeting for you, Paul. Now, look what they said.

And after those days, we took up our backpacks, this carriage, our backpacks, and went up to Jerusalem. They were in it together. So wonderful.

No fair weather, Christian, you know. They said, look it, we're going with you. We'll lay our lives down with you.

We've just been shown in the Spirit there's nothing but trouble ahead, but we're in this with you all the way. We're going with you. You see, you've got to have a love for Jesus to have that attitude.

It'd be so easy to say, well, Paul, we tried to warn you, we love you, we'll pray for you, that God's angels and then start quoting scriptures where he'll be saved. No, they said, we're going with you. You remember, they probably all, Paul probably never did because he didn't have a love for Christ, but it's possible that Luke saw Jesus and sat in on teachings, and many of these men were saved long before Paul.

You remember in Luke 9 where Jesus was approaching His time to be betrayed, and He was preparing the disciples for that fellowship of suffering. Remember, Paul later writes in Philippians 1.29, It's given unto us on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for His sake. To enter into that fellowship of suffering.

And you remember Jesus, He gathered them together in one of His Bible studies, and He said, now the Son of Man is going to Jerusalem in a few days, and I'm going to be betrayed by the hands of men, and I'm going to be crucified and put to death. But after three days, I'm going to rise again. And then He went on to say, after He told them what's going to take place, if you're going to associate with Me, it's not always going to be easy if you're going to call yourself a disciple.

And the next verse, He says, now, if you're going to be My disciple, He that is My disciple will deny Himself daily. Deny Myself daily, take up My cross, and He says, and follow Me. Now, He just told them He's going to be beaten and killed.

And they're claiming to be His disciples. He says, well, this is what's facing Me if you're going to follow Me. And because you're a friend of Mine, you might get swept up into it too.

And here's what's ahead. Now, you see, in this life, now, beyond that is eternity with eternal rewards where Paul says, hey, I reckon that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory it will receive with Him. And so, He said, if you're going to be My disciple, you need to deny yourself daily.

Take up your cross and follow Me. He that would seek to save his life will lose it. You put all your effort into your own little confine, your own little comfort zone, and try to just slide through without anything, no one rocking the boat until the rapture, you're going to lose your life.

But he that will lose his life for the Gospel and for My sake, the same shall save it. And these men knew that. They were so in love with Jesus Christ, they didn't allow some fear or threat of the future or some danger stop them from going all the way with Jesus.

Or even consider, well, we'll hold back. It could be kind of scary. What's the guarantee we may not be in trouble? No.

We. I like that. Luke says, I'm with you, Lord.

I'm with you, Paul. We took up our backpacks. The word carriage there in the Old English means backpack or baggage.

The thing we throw over our shoulder with our belongings. And went up to Jerusalem. And this is a blessing too.

And there went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea and brought with them one Manassan of Cyprus, an old disciple with whom we should lie. Here's a man who's an old man. What an attitude he could have taken.

You know, I'm getting a little too old for this stuff. I've been following the Lord. You younger bucks, you go.

I'm an old man. And besides, if they find out you're staying at my house when we get to Jerusalem, they might come down and burn my house down. And I don't have the physical strength.

I don't have retirement. I don't have a pension or Social Security. And I don't have a life insurance policy.

I don't know if I want to get involved with you, Paul. I'm an old disciple. And especially to open my home up to someone like you, I could get in trouble.

I could lose everything I own. I'll just stay here in Caesarea. I've served the Lord a long time.

No. You went with him. You can stay in my home.

The older I get, Manassan's saying, the more I love him. The more I just want of him. I don't care how it ends.

I don't care how I go out. I just want to be with him. My life is not my own anymore.

Rose and I were talking the other night. And we both realized we've had the blessed privilege of being together for 38 years as a man and wife and dating and knowing each other another 10 years. And knowing how old I'm going to be if I have another birthday.

Who cares? But really, I've only got eight more years until biblically I'm at the age that he's going to live, 3 score and 10. And we got to thinking, Honey, I said, Honey, what is it that we haven't experienced in life that if we don't go to this place or buy this or get to watch that or get to go here that we're not going to be happy? We've experienced it all. Why not just the rest of Jesus? There's nothing left.

It's all yours. We could care less. We've experienced so much.

But there's going to be so much more in eternity. And there's just a few years left. Let's just totally dedicate and sell out until we die.

She said, You know, that's a good idea. And so we both prayed. Lord, this is it.

Work in our lives that there's nothing in this world or self anymore that we think we need to hold back from You just so we can be happy as a Christian. Lord, there's nothing more fulfilling than knowing You. Now, stop and think of Manasseh.

He could have taken the easy way. But he said, you know what? He went with him. When we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

He said, Lord, we're in this with you. I'm going, too. That reminds me, earlier in action, remember, they were forbidden, the apostles were forbidden, to speak in this man's name or mention his name in the temple area in Jerusalem.

And they were slapped around, you know, beat up and thrown in jail, beaten some more. And they all got together and they all started singing praises unto God, thanking the Lord that they were worthy to be beaten. Now, see, a person who doesn't know Christ at that level, and I certainly don't claim to know Him at that level, but I sure want to, I think that's insane.

That's extremism or fanaticism. No, it isn't. It's right here in the book of Acts.

It's the record of the movement that formed Western civilization. The very freedoms that you and I sit under came because of the fanaticism of men who loved Jesus Christ, were willing to just throw it all away and deny themselves daily and take up their cross and follow Him. Now, Satan gets people frightened and says, boy, if you even think like that, I mean, God's just going to take everything away from you, smite you with a disease and say, this is how you're going to glorify me.

You'll be crippled the rest of your life, blind and poor. You'll have to take a vow of poverty. So, oh, no way am I selling out.

That's such a lie from the devil. Whatever God does decide, when you just say, Lord, I'm tired of holding back. Take it all.

You'd be amazed at how much freedom you have, how much joy and fulfillment, what a blessing it is. What a blessing it is. And look what it does for one year old.

I don't see anywhere in the Bible where someone retires from serving the Lord. I read in the Bible where pastor so-and-so retired. What? I don't see it in here.

Manasseh was an old disciple. He says, stay at my house. I'm going with you.

And so notice, we, we're in this together, Paul. We're with you. It's because they loved Jesus.

They weren't seeking to save their life. They were losing their life for Him, and they saved it. And so the day following, Paul went in with us.

Luke's with him right there, you know, thinking, well, what's going to happen? But I'm going to be with you, Paul. No matter how frightening, no matter what the threats, no matter how dangerous the future may be, I'm with you in this. And so, Paul went in with us unto James and all the elders that were present.

And when he had saluted them, or greeted them in love and respect, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by His ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. Now, here you're going to see what happened to the church in Jerusalem.

To swell the ranks, they began to compromise to get the Jews into the church. They began to compromise on the law of Moses and didn't make it an issue. They didn't teach them fully, and so to keep from being persecuted themselves and to swell the ranks, they allowed the Jews to come in and the Jews were hanging on to the old Mosaic ritual and it became law to them.

They were mixing law with grace just so they wouldn't be persecuted. Now, notice their concern. They were worried about Paul.

It's interesting how people were worried when Paul showed up. They didn't know what he was going to say. At this particular time in his life, he creates the sixth riot in his ministry.

Everywhere he went, he created a riot. This is his sixth riot before the chapter is over. Not because he wanted to do it, but because he was faithful to God and then God in his providence designed things and took control of things to use Paul even greater.

And so when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. Oh, great, Paul. The Lord is using you with the Gentiles.

But then, now notice instantly what they said. And said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law. In other words, putting themselves right back under works.

Maintaining the feast days, the holy days, and the law. Circumcision, the different rituals that Jesus Christ came to set everyone free from. And they were still maintaining it.

And when someone puts himself under his own manner of works or the law to try and please God, that person always loses their joy. Because here's what happens. When I put myself under my own set of works or the law, then I begin to perform and say, God, you have to bless me.

I've done all these right things. I've done all these things for you this week. You have to bless me.

God doesn't have to bless me at all. His blessings come through grace. I can never deserve it.

And I can't force God to bless me. He won't. He can't.

And He won't. Paul, remember, wrote the whole book of Galatians warning about mixing law and grace, expecting God to bless you because of your performance. God, you owe me.

I've done all these things this week. I've been so faithful. And a person that expects God to bless them like that, they may see someone else not living so strictly and rigidly as they are, and it seems like they have more joy and God's doing more for them.

You say, Lord, how can you bless them? And you find yourself getting angry. You get angry. And when someone puts himself under his own law, under the rules, he'll lose all of his joy.

He'll be rigid and get angry. He'll lose your joy. Grace sets us free.

Lord, I can't deserve a thing. I'm trusting in you. I'm trusting and yielding to the Holy Spirit.

And Lord, whatever blessings you're going to bore up on my life, Lord, I'll just receive them. Lord, praise your holy name, Lord. I yield to you, Lord.

See, that's what pleases God. That's faith. The just shall live by faith.

So here you have this mixture in the church, and they're worried about Paul coming in because they knew Paul understood the grace message. And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the custom. Now, Paul never taught that at all.

What he taught was that Jesus Christ has set us free, that there aren't even issues anymore. And they're taking it to maintain control over the people, and they're saying, Paul taught this, Paul taught that. He did not.

He did not forbid anybody from circumcising their children. He just said, it's not even an issue anymore. You don't have to do it.

It's not even an issue. Christ has made us free. There again, he brings it out clearly in Romans and clearly in Galatians.

And it doesn't make anybody more righteous. It doesn't make anybody receive more of the Holy Ghost. Paul did not teach that.

It wasn't even an issue with Paul. What is it therefore? The multitude must needs come together, for they will hear that Thou art come. Now stop and think of what's going on.

Twenty years earlier, Paul, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, deputized by the Sanhedrin to go all over the Holy Land, all the way to Damascus, and he was a zealot for the law, for Moses, and he did everything he could to kill and persecute Christians and stop the heresy of the Jesus movement. That was Paul's life. And he's on his way to arrest Christians, to have them put to death, to drag them back to Jerusalem, and Jesus Christ arrests him in his love.

And like the love of God does, he's a changed man. He's a changed individual. And he goes from this rigid, self-righteous anger and judgment of others to being filled with grace and love.

And the man that once persecuted the church is now, they think, opposed to Moses. They don't understand that Christ fulfilled the law of Moses and it was no longer needed for righteousness. And so now here's this one who attacked Christianity back in Jerusalem and now he's against them, they believe.

And so the Jews are afraid. All these people that are calling themselves Jews and living under the law, they're going to leave the church. There may be a riot here.

There could be all kinds of trouble if Paul preaches grace. And so what do they say? Just to maintain the peace, Paul, do therefore this that we say to thee. We have four men which have a vow on them.

Take them and purify them. Now remember, it's the Feast of Pentecost. Roman historians who were there, it's on record there were over 2 million Jews in that city at this time from all over the known world fulfilling their obligation to Levitical law making the feast at Jerusalem.

So there were well over 2 million Jews in the city. Now, if there was a riot, Rome gave freedom to a point. If there was a riot, Rome would soup down and slaughter people.

Pax Romana. The peace of Rome was above all. The law of Rome.

And if the Jews did not quell the riot or any kind of disturbance, particularly in their own religion, they would come down and quell it with their soldiers in a brutal way. If the Roman general or commander of Jerusalem did not stop the riot, he would lose his life. And so the Jewish priests were really concerned that now that Paul's in the city, we cannot have a riot.

We cannot have trouble on the day of Pentecost on the temple area. Because there were probably 10,000 soldiers in the confines of Jerusalem and they always swelled at the Antonia Fortress at the northwest corner of the Temple Mount. The Roman soldiers would look down on the feast to make sure there was no trouble.

They'd have Roman soldiers there just in case. And so the Jewish priests were thinking, man, Paul's here, the feast of Pentecost, if we have a riot, man, you know what's going to break loose. So Paul, here's what we've got figured out to maintain the peace.

Prove to everybody you're still a Jew and you still go along with the Jewish ritual. And here's where Paul made a mistake. Now, Paul was not afraid of anything.

He didn't give in to the elders. The elders made the terrible mistake by already compromising and allowing Jewish ritual and keeping it going when it shouldn't even be an issue anymore. It's been done away with in the death of Christ, fulfilling it.

It all pointed to the sacrifices of Christ. But the elders compromised. Now, Paul, you prove to the Jews that they won't be upset and cause any trouble and then the Roman authorities have to come down on the day of Pentecost and beat everybody.

Here's what you do. You go through the motions on Pentecost. We have four men that have a vow.

Now, here's what the vow was. On any feast day, on any given time, a Jew that was especially thankful to God for some special favor or to prove his love to God under the law would take a certain amount of days and take a vow. He would not work.

He would not eat. He would fast. He would not shave his hair or drink of the fruit of the vine to prove his love for God.

Then on that special day, and this happened to be Pentecost, the Jew would go to the temple with a sacrifice to offer up a thanksgiving, an animal to be sacrificed. He would shave his head signifying the end of his vow, opening himself up to humiliation of the public with his hair growing long. Shave the hair, take the sacrifice to the priest and they'd offer it on the altar and they would pay the temple fee.

Well, the situation was that many times the people that took the vows couldn't work. As they were fasting and isolating themselves, they had no money to pay the temple fee or buy the offering the day they wanted to break the vow and shave their head. So other Jews on their behalf would pay charges or pay for their sacrifice and allow them to break their vow and go in and sacrifice to God as an act of love themselves.

So the priest said, here's what we'll do. You've got four guys here and they don't have enough money to buy the sacrifice to go in to the priest. You, Paul, go alongside them.

You pay the charges. You go in with the vow so everyone will know that you're still with the mosaic situation here. Now what's Paul's reasoning here? He knew he didn't have to do that.

Remember what he said in 1 Corinthians 9? He said, To the Jew I became a Jew. I become all things to all people that I might win them to Christ. And then the whole chapter of 14 in Romans, what's he say? He that is weak in the faith, don't argue with them and dispute with them.

By your strength and by your meat and your depth, don't stumble your weaker brother by arguing with them and trying to make a point that you don't have to go through this, you don't have to do that. So Paul said, Even though I have the liberty, I'll subject myself to this just so I won't cast a stumbling block in their life. Romans, the whole chapter of Romans 14.

He says, Because the kingdom of God is not meat nor drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And so Paul had that attitude. He said, Alright, I'll go along with it.

Now God's going to override it all. Here the elders are compromising to try and keep the peace so there'll be no riot. So they go to Paul.

Paul says, Well, you know, I'm going to become all things to all people. I've written letters to the Galatians. I've been teaching for years that you don't have to do this since I've had the revelation, but to maintain the peace to try and win someone to Christ, okay, I'll go along with it.

So take them and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee are nothing. Paul, you're still going along with the Mosaic law. But that thou thyself also walkest orderly and keepest the law.

That's Galatianism. And there's Paul's mistake. He's trying to keep the peace.

He listens to the elders of the church in Jerusalem. They're compromised, and the whole thing backfires. When you compromise what you know according to Scriptures, it always will backfire.

Remember Paul said, Let every man be firmly persuaded in his own mind, in his own heart. Once God has taken you to a level in a relationship with Jesus Christ, and you know what God wants you to do, don't allow some human to cause you to back down. Now, we're to have the right attitude when we make our stand for Christ.

And there's the weakness of the church today. Remember James was writing, Him to knoweth it do right, and doeth it not to him that is sin. And there's a marvelous freedom in not having the fear of man, and being concerned with what people think of you.

Being more concerned with what Jesus thinks of me. Asking me to be obedient to Him. In love.

Not with an attitude, but in love. And not caring. I love Jesus too much.

And so I'm going to do what my Lord's telling me to do. And Paul made a mistake here. Trying to keep the peace.

He compromised his own principles that he long knew wouldn't work. In this particular case. And it did backfire.

Instead of maintaining peace, it created another riot. It seems like everywhere he went, he created a riot. As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing.

You see, they were still making a separation between Jew and Gentile. Paul said there is no difference. There's no division between Jew and Gentile anymore.

That middle wall of partition has been taken down through Christ through His shed blood. Now on the temple of the Jews, there was the courts of Solomon, the outer rim. This 33 acre plaza.

A magnificent site. Just the bare plaza itself, even with that dome of the rock that desecrated it. It's still a beautiful area today.

33 acres. Outside the whole rim was a portico with these beautiful columns. It was called Solomon's Porch.

Inside was this huge area of a rectangular of the court of the Gentiles that they were allowed to go in that far. Now, within the court of the Gentiles, around the court of men and the holiest of all, and the temple itself was another wall. Inside that was the court of the women.

A Gentile could not go past that one wall into the court of the women, then through that into the court of the men, then into the area where the priest alone could go, and they would be put to death. In fact, they found two columns in the destruction of Jerusalem, they have them in the museum today, written on it that any Gentile that passes beyond this point has taken his life in his own hands and he's dead because of his own actions. There's a wall of separation.

The Jew never accepted a Gentile. Even if they were proselytes, they could not enter in where the Jews were, because the Jews felt that God was their God privately, and they had a greater and a closer relationship than anybody else, and the Jewish rabbis thought that Gentiles were created just to keep the fires of hell burning. They taught it.

It's in their writings. Paul comes along, Jesus comes along, and breaks down the separation. He's the Savior of all.

There's neither Jew nor Greek, Scythian, bond nor free. We're all one in Christ. Paul said at first there were two, Jewish and Gentile races.

Now there's one, one man in Christ, the body of Christ. The wall of separation has been torn down, and Paul taught those things. Now look what happens.

So they're to keep themselves from things offered to idols, and that's one of the biggest weaknesses in the Gentile world. That's the one thing you won't see a Jew guilty of is idolatry. Since the Babylonian captivity, you won't see any Jews really guilty of idolatry, but the Gentile peoples of the world continually have to have statues or standing images or some kind of an image of some kind to remind them of God, whoever it may be, even Jesus Christ.

That just shows you the person I have a good relationship with, Jesus Christ. That's the last statue you should have as a Christian, one that represents Jesus Christ. The Bible forbids those things.

But for Gentiles, for some reason, it's in their being that they can't show homage or worship God without a standing image, some kind of a statue or an idol. In fact, turn to Leviticus. Look what we know in Exodus

24, before they even went in toward the promised land, they were to have no graven image that represented him.

But look what he says now to the priest, because he knew the priest would be affected by it and tempted. Leviticus 26. And the Jews maintained that because many Gentile converts came in from all kinds of religions.

They had to have statues. They thought that it had like an emotional, psychological effect on the senses in their temples to have these beautiful statues of their gods. They would kneel down before them.

Well, what does the Lord tell the Jews? No, we don't do that. When you know the living God, He's dwelling in your heart, you shouldn't have to resort to something like that to feel emotional or feel closer to God. It just proves that you're distant from God.

Look what he tells them in Leviticus 26. You shall make you no idols, nor graven image, neither rear up a standing image, neither shall you set up any image of stone in your land to bow down unto it. Even if it does represent God.

He forbids it. It's pagan. It's heathen.

It's Gentile. For I am the Lord your God. You're to have a living relationship with me.

And as you go through Christianity today, it's amazing how many Gentile Christians still disobey the Word of God and think that that's pleasing to God. Remember, He does not reveal Himself through anything made by hands. Paul tells us in Acts.

So whatever voice, whatever direction that someone gets from a statue, even in Christian circles, it's demonic. God will not violate His nature, His character, and His Word. There's something about a Gentile that simply has to have it.

And even in Paul's day, they were concerned about it. This is what we are concerned about with the Gentiles. That they keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from strangled, and from fornication.

So then Paul took the men and the next day purifying himself with them, entering into the temple to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification. Until then, an offering should be offered for every one of them. And when the seven days were almost ended, in other words, the last day of the Feast of Pentecost, the Jews which are of Asia, up around Ephesus and what's today Turkey, Galatia, when they saw Him in the temple, stirred up all the people and laid hands on Him.

It backfired. Jews that had come from Asia to worship on the Feast of Pentecost recognized Paul from Ephesus and Galatia. And the Gospel being preached there maybe the year earlier or hearing about Paul and had some of their friends get saved in those areas.

And here they see Paul and notice what they say. They cried out, Men of Israel, help! This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people and the law and this place, and further brought Greeks also into the temple and hath polluted this holy place. No, Paul didn't.

He was teaching grace. People were being freed by the Holy Spirit realizing this isn't needed anymore. He did not attack the law.

He did not attack Judaism. He taught grace. He taught the New Testament.

And when someone understands the New Testament, they're set free. You never win people to Christ by attacking their religion. My pastor had a great saying once.

He said, You don't get the darkness out of the room by beating it with a bat. You just turn on the light. And too many people attack the religion to get them to Christ.

Jesus said, If I be lifted up, if I'm really exalted and people understand the cross and my love and my grace and my redemption, I will draw all men to me. Not by attacking. Paul never attacked the men on Mars Hill.

In fact, he said in very respectful terms, I perceive that you're all very religious, but you're worshipping that which you know not. Never attacked. Jesus never attacked.

And Paul wasn't attacking. You see, the message of grace had such a powerful effect that people automatically were looking to Christ. He was so wonderful the way he's portrayed so truthfully in grace and truth that people were just walking away from those little things.

And many of the Jews that were in the temple area knew that some of their friends had responded to this man back in their homeland. And now they see him in the temple. And of Israel, this man is the guy that teaches everyone against the law.

And he's polluted this holy place. How could Paul pollute the holy place? For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus and Ephesians whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple. Now, they didn't even see him in the temple, but they saw Trophimus, a Gentile believer from Ephesus in Jerusalem with Paul.

And so they assumed that Paul had him inside the court of the Gentiles. Inside into the court of the women. He said, he's desecrated the temple.

He's taken a Gentile past this point. And man, here comes the riot. It's all assumption.

But who's allowing it all? God himself. You know, it says as a man devises in his heart, it's the Lord that directs it. You know, we plot and we plan and it's amazing.

Nothing's going to take place until God allows it or in God's timing. In His time. He makes all things beautiful in His time.

And I'm starting to learn. Man, when I see God moving in a different direction and things aren't going my way, I'm not striving, trying to beat the devil and strain. I can see God, your providence, your hand, it's just, you don't seem to be in agreement with me, Lord.

Do you understand, Lord? If you did it my way, Lord, it'd take place a lot quicker. He says, Bill, if I did it your way, there'd be no Calvary Chapel in New York. There'd be nobody showing up if I did it your way, Bill.

I'd bless in spite of you, Bill. We have to learn that. And so he's overriding all these plans and this compromise to keep anybody from causing any trouble.

Don't be faithful to the Word of God. And you know what? You see it in Christianity and that's why the church is so weak. That's why churches have to be entertainment centers because they can't get people to show up any other way.

They've got to sweat and scream and work things up in the flesh and hype things or people just won't come back. And so they compromise the truth. Again, they're worried about, gee, if I teach this today, Brother so-and-so's there and he's got quite an income and he's a big tither.

Lord, I'm just going to skip over that verse. He might get offended and leave the church. Oh, I know so-and-so.

Lord, I know this text is going to put the finger on so-and-so. I'm not playing Holy Spirit, but they may think I'm playing Holy Spirit because this is what they're doing. I can't teach that, Lord.

They're here tonight. And you see the state of the church. Oh, the city gets stood up.

Notice verse 9. They had seen Paul with Trophimus the Ephesian. And all the city was moved and the people ran together. They took Paul and drew him out of the temple.

Forthwith, the doors were shut. And they went about to kill him. So much for keeping the peace and compromising and going through the motions.

And tidings came to the chief captain of the band, that would be the Roman soldiers, the commander, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Here's the riot. The very thing they're trying to stop.

Who immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down under them. And when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating Paul. In other words, because they knew.

See, if it continued, they'd all be put to death by the Romans because it was forbidden. So here, isn't it amazing? The church is too weak to protect Paul. The church compromises to keep peace because it's weak and it creates the riot.

And God has to use the Gentile, heathen world to save His apostle. The Roman government. The state authorities.

Amazing. Then the chief captain came near and took him and commanded him to be bound with two chains and demanded who he was and what he'd done. In reality, now, you see the commander's chained.

He's arrested by God. And now he has to, see, listen to Paul. And the two Roman soldiers that are chained to Paul are Paul's men.

All of a sudden, the riot takes place and everybody's Paul's prisoner. You see, the rest of this story, God is so amazing. This thing goes into reverse, all this conference.

And God works all things to the good to those that love Him and are called according to His purposes. And now, instead of Paul being a prisoner, here's a whole mob, throngs of Jews, Roman soldiers, a general, a powerful man, and the Roman government, they're Paul's prisoner. Maybe that's happened in your life.

I mean, you're thrust into a situation and you keep trying to quit your job and move and change because of the persecution. And you don't realize that because of your job that these people that are upset with you have become your prisoner. And you're supposed to be sharing the Gospel, sharing your faith, pleading to get another job or quit, or just, you know, being all inward and afraid.

Here we pray that God uses to send me in the mission field. And each one of us has a personal mission field. And they become your prisoners.

They have to work with you. They have to live with you. Why do you keep wanting to go over to Greece and Africa and South America? Is everybody saved in the house yet? In the family? On the job? In the neighborhood? Man, you should have felt it last night.

I did it again. Both neighbors. Back, you know, Crusade time.

Let's see, the fourth time, Billy Graham, Greg Lorries, our own Whitefield, and they saw me coming with my Titanic track and my invitation. Walked in, sat down, and boy, you could just feel it. One's going hunting, the other one's... Let's see, what are we doing Friday night? What are we doing Saturday night? Aren't we going... You know what? They were polite, but they were squirming.

And I was there, and you know what? I just invited them personally, but it's amazing. They were my captives. They're my captives.

They're my neighbors. They can't get away from me. And every time I see them in the yard, I talk to them about Jesus.

Doesn't matter what they say, I can get Jesus into it. They're my captives. You have captives around you unless they can sell their house and get away.

But isn't it amazing? You see, Paul's... Everybody's been taken captive. And some cried one thing, another among the multitude cried another. When he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was born of the soldiers for the violence of the people. The mobs going nuts trying to get him to kill him, screaming and yelling. And the soldiers actually pick up Paul and carry him up the steps of the Antonia fortress.

And they're all screaming and yelling one thing and another. The multitude of the people followed after crying away with him. Identical to what they said to Jesus Christ, didn't they? He says, Marvel not if the world hates you, it hated me also.

Exactly what they said to Jesus. He was so like Jesus that they said the very same things to him that they said to Jesus. And what does Jesus say? Blessed art thou when you are persecuted for righteousness sake.

How blessed. That you'd be so much like Jesus that people would revile you and persecute you. What an honor.

I've had my own family members curse me. My own brother, who I was deeply close to, since I've become a Christian, he's never set foot in my home. In the 22 years I've lived here, he's never driven here or visited me or stepped foot in my home.

I go to his house a lot. Away with him. It's given unto us not only to believe on his name but also to suffer.

And there's nothing more honorable than to enter into the fellowship of the sufferings. Now, that doesn't mean just physical beating. That may never happen to some of us.

It's not an automatic given that all of the fellowship of the sufferings are going to get hurt. Isn't it amazing these macho men go out and get their teeth knocked out playing football? Go out and play football and smack each other in the mouth and box and fight. Go to bars and fight and tear each other's hair out and feel good about it.

Look at what happened to me last night, man. And they're scared to death. They might insult me if I talk out loud about Jesus.

I might get hurt. I might be physically attacked. Oh, give me a handkerchief with perfume on it so I can be safe.

I mean, it's crazy. Guys will fight, box, play football, knock their teeth out and are afraid they're going to get persecuted if they can be sold out for Jesus Christ. And so Paul was led into the castle.

He said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? Paul spoke to him in perfect Greek. Remember, he could speak Aramaic, he could speak Hebrew, and he spoke Greek because it was a Hellenist area where he grew up, the common language. Art not thou that Egyptian which before these days made us an uproar and led us out unto the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? Now earlier there was some Egyptian who claimed to be the Messiah and the Deliverer.

And he gathered together about four thousand men, radical guys, who were called the Dagger Bearers. And they'd carry these little eighteen-inch daggers under their robes and they'd create riots and disturbances in the streets and start stabbing people in the riots, in the crowds. And he got them to follow him.

He said, I am the Deliverer. I'm going to deliver the Jews. If you'll follow me.

And he took them over to the Mount of Olives and he had them believe that when they got to the Mount of Olives all the walls of Jerusalem would collapse. And the Romans would flee and then they'd march back and he'd set up the kingdom. Well, it was all a big farce.

And the Romans went after him and he fled, killed about half the four thousand and the guy took off. And this Roman soldier who was not in Jerusalem at the time is now stationed there and thinks, maybe this is that Egyptian guy I heard about creating this riot. Paul said, I'm a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city, and I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

Here again, in deep respect, I'd like to speak to the people. And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs and beckoned with a hand unto the people. Now look at this.

Look at the amazing anointing on this man because he had no fear. Now remember, there's a riot. The soldier couldn't calm the people down.

They're all screaming. The Roman soldiers couldn't shut them up. And a man, one man, who loves Jesus Christ in the will of God, who's not afraid, waves his hand, God's Holy Spirit in his promise, and absolute silence.

Now who was arrested there? Who's in control? Paul stood on the stairs and beckoned with a hand unto the people and there was made a great silence. All he did is just... You see, God gives you power and authority when you really give yourself totally to Him. You never have to fear.

God's power, without any restraint, is available to each one of us in any given situation when we yield to Him. You never have to fear. Lo, I am with you always, he said.

There's no weapon formed against you that can prosper. But the thing is, am I willing to sacrifice my life for the gospel, for Jesus Christ, to live for Him in such a way that I'm not afraid of man, I don't care what happens to me. That doesn't mean I live reckless.

But Lord, I'm yielding to you. Whatever your providence is, whatever you decide, wherever you want to lead me now from now on, I'm not going to start holding back and worrying, trying to control things. Lord, I want that.

See, the church could be so powerful. There could be so much being done in each one of our lives, so much more. God has this for each one of us if we're willing.

Does that mean I can't live a normal, full life? Absolutely not. It means it's an abundant life. Jesus said, I give you an abundant life.

But the power and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and it's the anointing of love and discipline and authority from God. It's not acting fanatic. It's not being fake and drawing attention to yourself, putting on some big show.

All Paul said was, May I speak? And that's all God needed just to take control of everything. Every demon in the area that was creating the riots and the hatred were bound. He didn't even have to pray.

Paul didn't even have to pray. Lord, bind Satan. He just said, May I speak? God said, Paul, I am so in love with you, so proud of you.

You've not forsaken me. You're not afraid of what people think. You're not worried about your own personal little comfort zone.

You're totally dedicated to me. I'll be with you. I'll always be with you.

And the anointing and the presence of God was so powerful, it overwhelmed a crazy mob that a Roman centurion couldn't come. All he says, May I speak? And he's speaking to them in the Hebrew tongue. Oh, what he speaks.

Next Wednesday night, we'll see what he says. Shall we stand? Now, remember verse 14? What's the last thing they all said when they couldn't stop Paul from going to Jerusalem? They said, God's will be done. Now here's hundreds of people, Jews, compromising Christians, Roman soldiers, absolutely the prisoner of the Apostle Paul in the anointing.

God's will has been done. If you submit your will to God's life, God's power, so many wonderful things can be accomplished. There is nothing more joyous and wonderful than serving God and just leaving it in His hands every day.

Lord, whatever you have planned today, I've got responsibilities. There's nothing wrong with being disciplined, and this is my plan. But Lord, if you decide to interrupt it, you're the boss.

I want to be flexible, Lord. I want you to use me, Lord, for your glory. Heavenly Father, how we thank you for the presence of God Almighty in the midst of turmoil and chaos.

In the midst of riot, you're there. And how quickly you can subdue the storm just as you did, Lord, on that band of men going across the Sea of Galilee. You calmed the storm so easily.

You just spoke. And Lord, there are people here tonight and their lives are in the midst of a storm. It seems like their lives are chaotic.

It just seems like everything is out of control. You're the one that can bring everything under control. Lord, make us willing that we yield to your control, that we can walk together at your pace, in your direction, stopping when you stop, walking at your speed, going in the same direction, that we can be agreed to my bless.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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