

Paul's Arrest, Part 1: The Measure of Humility

Scripture: Acts 21:17-26

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It's good to be back in our series in the book of Acts this morning, and I would draw your attention to the 21st chapter of Acts. And we continue in this marvelous narrative regarding the ministry of the Apostle Paul, as he continues the last little leg of his journey toward the city of Jerusalem. This is the conclusion of the third of Paul's missionary tours, tours in which he not only preached the gospel and established the church, but in which he nurtured the church. And on this particular third tour, he collected money from the Gentile congregations to give to the poor saints at Jerusalem as a token of love, and as a gesture of unity.

So as he moves toward Jerusalem, he is loaded with money, as well as a wonderful report of what God has done, and he has with him a group of Gentile converts that have been won to Christ, and who are representatives of the love of each of the Gentile congregations.

And so with this little group of men, and bags of money, he is moving toward Jerusalem. And as we approach the narrative as we have tried to do in each of our studies of narrative passages, we want to see beyond just the historical fact, to the principles and the qualities and the spiritual truths that underlie what we see on the surface. And I suppose that as we had gone along with the apostle Paul, he has so dominated every passage that we have been prone to see in these passages characteristics of him, and again, no different in this passage.

As I was reading through earlier in the week and finally discovered exactly what we would extract from the passage, I was just overwhelmed with one great spiritual quality that just oozes out of the passages, and it is the quality of humility. We talked about Paul's great power in preaching. We talked about his teaching. We talked about his persistence. We've talked about his discipline. We've talked about his courage. We've talked about his commitment. We talked about his convictions. We talked about so many qualities that made the man what he was. But here, there is one that cannot be ranked second to any other, and that is the quality of humility.

And so in looking at the passage, I was more prone to call it the measure of the man than I was to say this is the arrest of Paul. It is the arrest of Paul, but it is the measure of the man who is seen in the midst of the circumstance that interests me. And that becomes applicable to my life. I may never get arrested. I may never have to do what he did, but I need to learn the lessons of humility that he

exemplified, and so that's how it speaks to me.

Now the object for which Paul had so long been concerned, the course which he had faithfully pursued now for months and months and months, the goal which really consumed his heart and his mind; that thing which had been his ambition over the long and arduous miles of travel by foot and by ship was now about to be realized. He was going to reach Jerusalem, and he was going to give the money to the poor saints, and he was going to introduce the Jews to the Gentile Christians with hopes of unifying the church visibly in the world.

He must be kind of like the marathon runner who has run over the obstacles and through the obstacles, and across the terrain, and he has met every obstacle the course could possibly bring. And finally, he comes over a little hill, and he looks out into the valley and he sees a finish line, and he knows that he's on the last leg of his journey. And in some sense, it speeds his step, though his stamina may be gone, and this is how I see Paul as the last little leg of his journey becomes visible; 64 more miles from where he is in verse 14 to arriving at his destiny in Jerusalem. And this is a destiny, which God has planned for him.

Now, as he goes toward Jerusalem, he doesn't go alone. Look at verse 15; let's pick it up there. "And after those days, that is those days in Caesarea," Caesarea being that city on the coast, and you remember Paul was there for some time living in the house of Philip the evangelist. "And after the fellowship of those days, we took up our carriage," it says in the old language, that's not really what it was. We think of something with wheels. It means baggage or luggage. "They packed their bags and went to Jerusalem."

Notice they went up. Everything is up to Jerusalem because Jerusalem is high on a plateau. When you've been there, you can appreciate the statement, "He went up to Jerusalem." And so they took off on a 64 or so mile journey and went to Jerusalem. And verse 16 says, "They went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea." And here again, you have the same custom that when those people traveled, Christian friends went along with them all the time, halfway or a part of the way, or maybe all the way, just to accompany them to show good faith, fellowship and love to them; a beautiful custom.

And so the apostle then goes toward Jerusalem. And it was worked out that the man named Mason, you see a phrase "brought with them." It really should say brought to the home of Mason. Probably Mason did not accompany them from Caesarea, but merely living in Jerusalem, they brought Paul and his friends to him.

Now, he had a Greek name. Mason is a very common name, not uncommon at all; very common. And he was from Cyprus. If you have been listening to the news, you've been hearing about Cyprus. Well, here's a man who was from Cyprus 2000 years ago, and he was a Hellenistic Jew. The word Hellenist simply means Greek or Gentile. He was a Gentile not in the sense of his race, but in the

sense of his culture he was Hellenized. He was Greeked if you want to call it that in terms of his training.

So he was a Hellenistic Jew. He was raised in a Greek country. He had a Greek name. And it is probably the reason, or at least a part of the reason that they had arranged for Paul and his friends to stay there. I'm sure they didn't really understand how receptive the Jewish Christians would be to a whole pile of Gentiles staying in their house, especially the Jewish Jews who lived in Jerusalem, since they were very much oriented toward the Mosaic ceremony. And so they found a more liberal Hellenistic Jew, who was willing.

Incidentally, this man, too, says an early disciple, which means he was in on the foundations of the church. He may go back as far as Jesus. We don't know, but certainly to the beginnings of the church. He may have been a source for Luke; the fact that Luke writes here and notes Mason as an early disciple may have been indicative of the fact that the Holy Spirit used Mason to reveal some information to Luke in helping him write the book of Acts.

Anyway, off they go to Jerusalem to stay at the home of this particular man. Now, as we see the scene, we would assume that the apostle arrives about the feast of Pentecost. Fifty days after Passover, the feast of Pentecost took place. The apostle said in chapter 20, verse 16, that he definitely wanted to get there by Pentecost. He wanted to be there at a time when all the folks were congregated together. He felt that very important. And as well, I think he wanted to be there because he was Jewish, and because it was a celebration of Judaism, and he wanted to be a part of it. And so he was there at Pentecost.

It doesn't say it was Pentecost when he arrives. I assumed that because that was his plan, and he was really concerned with making it. And I assume it, too, because of the mass of people that were not only in the city, but in the temple. Something was going on, and it seems Pentecost would be a good explanation.

Now what occurs in the days there takes up three chapters. We're not going to be able to handle that, obviously, in one message or in one month, probably. But we'll just take it as it comes and in pieces. But note this: What you're going to see is the last of the ministry of Paul as a free man. This is it. Really from verse 27 on, Paul becomes, as he called himself in Ephesians 6:20, an ambassador in chains. From here on out, the man is a prisoner, which incidentally, it's good to note, does not minimize his ministry in any way at all. It doesn't have any affect whatsoever on the accomplishment of his objectives. They just changed, and he goes on doing what he always did, whether he was free or a prisoner. He just continued to fulfill his ministry. But it is interesting to note that his days as a free man are up, and from here on he's a prisoner in various places.

Now, as we look at the passage beginning from verse 17 on, and concluding in verse 36, we'll take that as a unit or maybe we won't get - no, we won't get that far, I'm sure. But taking that section as a unit, there are four C's that appear, and I only want to relate three of them today, and just touch on the fourth: Communion, concern, compromise and consequence. Those just are titles or hooks to hang sections on so you can help to break the passage down in your mind and get some sequence to it.

First of all, we find communion occurs as he arrives. And by the word communion, I don't mean they all sat down at the Lord's Table. The word means fellowship or sharing. The first thing that happened was there was a beautiful time of sharing with the believers when Paul arrived. I mean after all, the man was a tremendous missionary; had accomplished tremendous things. He arrives with these dear Gentile saints, and he arrives with this money, and it's a great time of sharing and rejoicing. In verses 17-28, we have that noted for us.

Notice 17 to begin, "And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us," and in what way? Gladly; it was a happy reception. You say, "Why?" Well, because they brought money, why else? Well, I think that's a good thought. That probably was true. They probably were thrilled about the money, because not for themselves necessarily, but there were many needy saints.

I would not simply say that it was the money. I wouldn't just say they were motivated crassly. I think there was great joy in their hearts because they brought along a whole group of Gentile converts. And they saw the people that had been won to Jesus Christ, and they were glad, too, because of the fact that the Gentile church was showing this tremendous act of love toward them, and they knew what animosities and bitterness there was between Jew and Gentile. And here were these Gentiles making a magnanimous offer of love to these Jerusalem Jews.

And then there was Paul, and Paul was a beloved man. There was just a warm and glad fellowship of sharing. Notice verse 17, "Brethren, this was Christians who received him." It was private but it was unofficial. They just had a little fellowship. The official thing happened next, verse 18, "And the day following, Paul went with us unto James." And the "us" includes Luke and the other fellows. "And all the elders were present."

Now, here we have Paul going into James, and the elders. This is a most interesting thing to note, just as an inside into the pattern of the New Testament and development of the church. When the church at Jerusalem first began, it was ruled by whom? The apostles. If you recall, you go clear back into the early times of the church and the apostles ruled. For example, even in Acts 4, you have them all bringing their money and putting it at whose feet? The apostles' feet. The apostles actually carried on the administration of the church.

It wasn't until the 6th chapter of Acts that the apostles begin to realize that things were getting out of hand and invited the people to choose out from among them some men full of faith, full of wisdom, full of the Holy Spirit, to take care of the business.

By the time you get to Acts 15:2, I think this is very interesting. It says that, "Paul, when he went to Jerusalem," in Acts 15, "met with the apostles and the elders." So you have a beginning of a transition. First the apostles did everything, and eventually God began to raise up elders, spiritual leaders. Now, by the time you get to Acts 21, they go in and it isn't any apostles there; there's only James and the elders. You say, "What happened to the apostles? Did they die?" They're not dead. They're gone. You say, "Where did they go?" They went out preaching all over the place. They're on mission work.

And you know, I've often thought, "How many more books of the bible could've been written like the book of Acts, to tell us not just about Peter and Paul, but what happened to the rest of those guys?" I mean I can think - people say, "What are we going to do in heaven for so long?" I'm just going to sit down - I know the first thing, and take those guys one at a time, and have them tell me the whole story. That'll take up a few centuries just getting all that worked out.

I really long in my heart to know what those other men were doing because I can just see the Apostle Paul multiplied ten or 11 times. Imagine it. But they were gone, and the reason they were gone, I think was two-fold. One, they had ministries, and two, they realized the Jerusalem church could be turned over to the leadership which they had raised there.

Now watch, by the time you get to the Epistles, there is no mention of apostles. There is no mention of prophets. There is, I should say in terms of the leadership in the pastoral epistles, there is only a mention of elders or bishops. That's the same term _____ pastors; same thing. So what happens then in church organizations? You start with apostles ruling in Jerusalem. Then they begin to raise up elders, and you have a combination of apostles and elders. Pretty soon, the apostles go and you have the church ruled by elders, and that becomes the pattern of the New Testament eventually.

And by the time Paul pens the last of his epistles, the pastoral epistles, and lays down the organization of the church, the church is to be ruled by elders. And Paul says to Titus, "Ordain elders in every city." That becomes the pattern. So here, we just - I think it's important to see that we're watching the transition of the church. It's at least 25 years since Jesus has died, and it's taken this time for the transition to occur.

Now how many elders were there? Well, I don't know how many there were, but there were an awful lot of them. You say, "Would you take a guess?" I would imagine that there were at least 100. Did that make elders' meetings kind of tough? Well, I don't know. It would all depend on how spiritual they were, wouldn't you think? If they're all filled with the Spirit, it'd make it real easy. You say, "Well, why

do you think there was so many?" Because there was so many Christians. You say, "How many Christians were there?" Well, I'm not sure how many, but I know by the 5th chapter of Acts there were at least 20,000. And if there are 20,000 at the 5th chapter of Acts, and we're a good 20 plus years later, you can believe there were a lot more.

In fact, if you look at verse 20, you'll see when they heard this, "they glorified the Lord. Said unto him, 'Those see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who believe.'" And the word for thousands is not the normal work for thousands. It is the Greek word for millions, which translates literally tens of thousands. It is a word used to speak of the angels.

Now you may be uptight about large churches. Well, you haven't seen anything. That was a large church; tens of thousands of believers. Now, if you're going to minister effectively to that kind of crowd, you're going to have to have a pile of elders, and they must've had some kind of gang.

But you know, it's interesting that James was still there. There is even, I think, in God's plan, in that situation where you have a plurality of godly elders, there is still one person who becomes the spokesman for the elders, or who represents them verbally. Not that he was better than they, because he's not. Not that he's more important, because he's not, but simply that you have to confine all of that finally to one voice.

And so there was James, and we've said much in the past about James, so we'll just mention his name at this point. So there they arrive, and it's Paul's time to report. They had the fellowship, passed out the money though it doesn't say anything about that. I'm sure they did and I'm sure that's what configured the gladness, and I know that they accepted it because the Lord doesn't have those kind of purposes at that kind of expense without good results. So I'm sure it was a great reception though the text says nothing about it.

And then they were going to listen to Paul because Paul was going to report. And so they got together, and the wonderful fellowship, and old Paul had set churches together in Syria and in Cyprus, and Galatia, and Macedonia and Achaia, and Asia Minor, and he had had so many fantastic experiences, and Jews were saved, Gentiles were saved, and this and that and the other. And you can just imagine they were all anxious to find out all the details of what had gone on in his ministry.

And so he reports to them all this information. And I see in this report, and I think this is the point that keyed me off to the concept of humility here. "I see in this the measure of the man in his humility." And I think what contributed to it was I was reading a book at the very time that this was going through my mind; a book that was a missionary biography, and it was a report from this missionary. He was telling about his work. And at the same time I was reading that, this passage came to my attention.

Look what he says in verse 19, "And when he had greeted them, he declared particularly what things he had done." Is that what it says? No, it doesn't say that, does it? That's what I like about Paul. He declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentile by his ministry. Now, notice he declared particularly. He didn't speak in generality. He told them incident after incident after incident of what God had done. It wouldn't have done any good.

"Do you know God converted eight people?" God, he got down to specifics, because there's the thrill. You can hear a report where a guy gets up and says, "I'd like to give you a report. Last year in our missions, we had 32 salvations, 42 rededications and 19 so and so." That's great, but that doesn't have any feet to it. That doesn't have any life in it. The guy gets up and says, "Let me tell you about Mr. So and so, and what God did in his life." That says something to me.

I'm not so interested in statistics as I am in people, right? And specifics; so he gave particulars about what God had done among the Gentile by his ministry. And when they heard it, they said, "Paul, you are terrific. You're probably the number one missionary in the whole world, Paul. Yes you are. In fact, we're going to have a Paul day, and we are going to give you the number one missionary plaque, Paul, to hang in your office that you've never had." No. "And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord." Don't you like that?

You know why I said what I did about the missionary biography I read? I read 100 pages of it. I put it down and said, "I can't read this." You know why I couldn't read it? Because it said, "This is what I did. This is what I did. And then when I did that, I did this. And this is what else I did. Then I was wise, and I figured this out and did that." And you know out of 100 pages of that, you've had it.

Listen, I know myself too well to know that you can't get away with that. You didn't do it. And I know, I'm in the Lord's work. When I do it, it's a mess. And you know, there's something about humility that just kind of comes through. If it's there, you'll get it. If it isn't there, you can't force it, right? And with Paul, it's just there.

You know, you can read a thing where a guy keeps saying the Lord did it, but you are in the back of your mind saying, "Sure, sure, sure, right." You're coming across different, fellow. But in the case of Paul, he's so free with giving God the glory, and I see humility in that. That's really what humility is all about. Every time he gave a report, it was like that.

I just checked out his other reports. Incidentally, I like his kind of mission board. You only had to give a report about every several years or so. But anyway you didn't have to write prayer letters all the time. Anyway, Acts 14, "He came back from his journey. His first journey." Listen to his report; I like this. "And when they had come together and gathered the church together, they reviewed all that God had done with them." That's so good because they see themselves as tools and God is doing the

work. All that God had done with them, and now He had opened the door of faith under the Gentiles. Isn't that good?

Chapter 15, verse 12, when they came to Jerusalem, "Then all the multitude kept silence, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul." And you know what they did? They declared what miracles and wonders had wrought. And you know what? Peter was the same way. He came back. Peter had won a Gentile to Christ. He actually led Cornelius to Christ.

Now, Peter could've come back and said, "I led a Gentile to the Lord, I did." No, he came back and he said, "You'll never believe this. You know what God did? God granted unto the Gentiles life." God did it. Always the godly man gives God the credit, right? It's a simple point, but it's there. So important. That's what Peter meant when he said, "If any man speaks," 1 Peter 4:11, "let him speak as of the oracles of God. If any man ministers, let him do it as of the ability which God gives, that God in all things may be glorified." See, that's why the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 3, "I pray that you be filled of the fullness of God. And then you exceeding of all you can ask or think according to the power that works in us." And then what? "That in the church, God may be glorified." Always the glory to God and Paul had that kind of mind. The mind of Christ, friends, is the mind of humility, and he gave God the glory. So we see the communion.

Let's look secondly at the concern. Even though there was a sweet time of sharing and communion, they were all excited and happy about the report. These Jewish leaders, these elders and James, were really uptight because there was a problem hanging over their necks. There's always a problem. You always have to kind of water down your joys with some of the sorrows of the ministry, and they had a real tough one hanging around their necks.

So this is what they said, and here we come to the concern; point two, the concern in verse 20. "They said unto him," verse 20, "Thou seest," and here the word seest is a word that means close observation. It may have been that a whole bunch of these Christians were gathered, and he actually saw them and saw how many. "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands," myriads, tens of thousands, "of Jews there are who believe."

Paul had visually seen this. Now that brings an interesting point. How did he see it? Well, maybe they were all gathered in one spot? Wouldn't that be something? Wouldn't it be something if tens of thousands of Christians were all out on some hill somewhere? You say, "Well, how could they ever hear? They'd have to do it with a PA system." Well, that's because you live in the day of PA systems and speakers and all that stuff. In those days, people developed great voices. Even in early America, they used to say Whitfield could be heard a mile away whether you wanted to hear him or not. You know what I mean? He didn't need a place to have a meeting. He stood up anywhere and had a meeting. The whole city listened. So that wouldn't be a big problem. And of course, maybe they broke down and various elders spoke to various Christians.

But somehow, Paul had observed a tremendous, tremendous crowd of believers. He said, "You see how many there are that believe?" I mean look what's going on. The Jews are coming to their Messiah. They're believing, but they are all," and a noun is used here, "zealot of the law." You say, "Well, now, how could you be a Christian and be a zealot of the law?" Not the law in terms of salvation, but the ceremonies. These were Jewish Christians who hadn't yet shaken off Jewish ceremony. They were still hung up on the Passover. They were still keeping the Sabbath. They were still watching what they ate. They were still watching what they wore. They were going through their routine.

A fellow was telling me even this morning after the first service that he met a Jewish Christian, a brand new Jewish Christians, who says he doesn't feel in his own life that he is really praying to God unless he genuflects. You know what that is? That's this. And if you ever go to Jerusalem and you see Orthodox Jews, they go over to the wailing wall or wherever they pray, and they go like this all the time they're praying; like that. It tends to keep you awake.

And to them, that's true praying. And he, as a Christian Jew, says he doesn't feel he's really praying unless he's doing this. Now, that's ridiculous right, to us? I mean it's ridiculous to say you're not praying unless you're doing that. I mean it's foolish. But to him, that is so much a part of the pattern of his life that to try to remove that becomes an obstacle to his prayer. So it's no big deal. The bible doesn't say, "Do not do this when you pray." So what's the difference if you want to do that? Well, it's different than doing this, whatever it is. Do whatever you want.

So the point is that the Jews did believe, and I believe they were saved people. They were Christian people, but they had never shaken the frames of Judaism. And of course living within the shadow of the temple and in all the Jewish system, and being raised on that stuff and having that engrained in your life, would be a difficult transition to make.

A young man in our church became a Christian, and he told me the first thing he wanted to do was go tell his rabbi the wonderful thing that happened next Sabbath. I said, "Next Sabbath?" And he was still going back to the thing because it was so much a part of his life. And he said, "Now I can appreciate it all so much more because it's all fulfilled in Christ, and now I see what it all means, etcetera, etcetera." And he wasn't even Orthodox. You can imagine these people; so locked into a system of religion that it was a way of life. They couldn't think outside the frames of Judaism, and now that they're believing, they still haven't been able to release themselves from the bondage of that kind of ceremony. And it isn't really evil. They weren't counting on it for their salvation. They were just doing it as custom and tradition.

And you know, there's always a big argument about whether a Jew is a religion or a race. And you know it's a difficult argument because it's both. True Jews follow the Jewish religion historically. Now

today it's a different thing, but in those days, boy, it was one in the same. You were a Jew racially and you were a Jew religiously. It was one in the same. There was no separation of church and state then.

Well, you say, "Why hadn't they dropped all that stuff? I mean after all God had split the veil of the temple and thrown the whole thing into chaos." I mean let's face it; once the holy of holies was unveiled, the whole secret was over, right? God wasn't there anymore to look right in. He's gone. So that deals out. And God had clearly told Peter in Acts 10 that there was no more dietary law, hadn't he? _____ with all the animals and said, "You can eat whatever you want. That's all over." And Peter said, "Whoa, I can't handle that, Lord. I've never eaten anything unclean." And He said, "Don't call them unclean. It's a new day." And so they had had plenty of information, but still difficult for them to get by with dropping those things.

Now, I ask myself the question, "Why was it difficult? Why didn't they drop these Jewish features?" And I gave these answers: One, they were ordained of God. Those people associated all that with God. And when they came to Jesus Christ, that would only enhance their love for God. Consequently, in the backs of their minds, they would say, "The same God who gave us our Messiah gave us these things," and it would be easy to rationalize, wouldn't it? Another reason: The leaders of the Jerusalem church, at no time, came out violently against the forms of Judaism. There's no indication at all in the New Testament or the book of Acts that these people who were the leaders in Jerusalem ever violently came out against these features. So they had no real pressure.

"And the council of Jerusalem," you say. "Well, what about them?" They decided that circumcision and all that stuff wasn't necessary, yes, but they decided that in reference to Gentiles, to Gentiles. And I think that those leaders just figured, and they were in the same transition, too, that it would just take time if they even figured that. You say, "Well, what about God? Didn't God care?" I don't think God cared at all. I don't think God really worried a lot about whether those people got out of those customs. You know why? By 70 A.D., He was going to wipe the whole system out anyway.

In 70 A.D., you know how God got rid of all Jewish ceremony? He just destroyed Jerusalem through Titus. He allowed Titus to come in and wipe the city out, right off the face of the earth. One hundred thousand Jews were killed. Within a few years after that 985 towns in Palestine were destroyed and everybody killed. He just destroyed Judaism in one shot; allowed it to happen. And so God wasn't in any big hurry.

The clearest thing ever written on the transition from Judaism to Christ is the book of what? Hebrews; that is the clearest thing that shows you drop the old and come to the new, and it was written in 68 A.D. God just gave them two years to get their heads on straight, and then whack, the whole system went.

So up until that time, I don't think God was really too concerned about it. As long as their faith was simply in Jesus Christ, the forms of activity were rather inconsequential, and God was tolerant in the period of transition. And do you know that since 70 A.D. until today, those forms don't exist anymore? Some people tried to resurrect them in a sort of a spiritual sense. There are no more sacrifices, and all those features of the temple are gone.

Well, that gives you a little idea of the problem. These people were still hanging on. Now, as hangers-on, they were really apt targets for the false teachers, and watch what happens in verse 21. He says, "These people are informed about you." All these Jewish Christians who are hanging onto the old forms have been informed.

Now, the word informed is kind of a nice little word _____. The word is _____ they have been drilled about you. They have been catechized. Somebody got a hold of those people, all these Christians, and you know what they did? They said that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and you say they should never circumcise their children, and they should never follow Mosaic ceremony.

Now, who do you think would've gone along, called all those Christians, and drilled them on that kind of misinformation? Take a guess? Judaizers. You say, "Who are the Judaizers?" For you that don't know, if you haven't been studying Galatians with us, those were the circumcision people; the people who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and you should accept Jesus, but you couldn't do that unless you were a Jew. So if you're a Gentile, you got to get circumcised first, become a Jew, and then you can come to Jesus. And then once you did, you had to continue to keep all the Mosaic Law. And so consequently, they were outside salvation. They were Salvationists by law.

And so they went around, and they got a hold, surely, of all these Christians. And you know what Paul does? You know that Paul is coming to town. He's the guy that tells all the Jews to forsake Moses, and not to circumcise their children, and not to obey the ceremonies. You see, these things were precious things to these Jewish people. They were their life, their culture, their tradition. And what these people, these Judaisers were doing, was undermining Paul by saying he doesn't want anything to do with Judaism. He's a heretic. He's apostatized. And the word apostasy is the word forsake. Right here he is apostate. He's teaching that you should be apostate from Moses. And boy, Moses was sacred stuff to them.

Believe me, people, Satan is the father of lies. Did you know that? He is a liar from the beginning. The first time he opens his mouth, he's lying in Genesis. And he doesn't stop, and he lies incessantly. Even when he sneaks up and tells the truth, it's for a lying reason. He's a liar. That's who he is. You want a good definition of Satan? He is a liar. And you ought to know that because he lied about everything, and he lies about Paul.

You know something? Paul never taught Jews to forsake Moses. He taught Gentiles not to think they had to become Jews. See the difference? He taught Gentiles not to be circumcised. Why? Because they didn't need that. He taught Gentiles you don't need the ceremonies of the Law. He did not teach Jews not to be circumcised, and he did not teach Jews not to follow those traditions. In fact, in the case of Timothy, he actually had Timothy circumcised, didn't he? Acts 16;2 and 3: The reason he had him circumcised was he was a Jew. He was at least half Jewish, which qualified him. And he said, "If you're circumcised, you'll be much more effective in reaching other Jews because they'll accept you as a Jew."

He did not teach Jews to avoid circumcision. He did not do that at all. This was a lie, flat out. The Judaisers, they lie, too, because you see, they're the dukes of Satan. You ever notice the dishonesty in our world? You ever become aware of that? You can hardly listen to anything that isn't a lie. I'm so skeptical; I don't believe hardly anything I hear from unbelievers. I don't care what it is. I turn on the news; I don't even believe that. I don't know what to believe in the world, so I just tend to believe nothing. And I crawl deeper into the scriptures. Oh, it's a lying world.

I don't allow my children to watch television unless I'm there. The reason is because one of our little guys recently, he started to lie. He told a lie, and then another lie, and another lie. I thought, "What's going on? What is he doing? We don't have this problem." And so we sat down and had a long, theological talk about lying, etcetera. And then I watched one of the little dumb things that he watches, and I watched what was going on, and that thing was a lie. It was open deceit; a little cartoon thing. A guy was telling a lie to accomplish a good end. The guy with the white hat was telling lies to get his goals. I said, "That's it. No more television unless I'm there and interpreting."

Our society is predicated on lies because Satan is a liar. So he lies about Paul. Believe me, folks, Satan is a liar. And one of the great ways Satan uses to destroy the work of God is through lies. Why else do you think the Apostle Paul would say to Timothy, "Don't ever receive an accusation against an elder unless it is in front of," what? Two or three witnesses. Because actually ministries can be destroyed by lies about ministers. So the next time you hear some juicy, syrupy, drippy, good gossip about somebody in the Lord's service, you better check yourself. Make sure it's true. Satan is a liar.

So they give this big lie, "He teaches all Jews." That was a lie itself. He didn't teach all Jews. That would be impossible. "Who among the Gentiles forsake Moses?" That's another lie. "Saying not to circumcise their children," that's a lie. "In order to walk after customs," that's another lie. They lie all over the place. In fact, you know what he did himself? He took an azurite vow in chapter 18, didn't he? He still kept the ceremony. Moses, he's in a big hurry to get to Pentecost. He's still working on the Day of Pentecost as a feat. He was himself circumcised. He still kept the Sabbath on occasion himself. You can find it out further on in the book of Acts.

So he wasn't at all teaching those things. He had Timothy circumcised, which negates the first thing they said. The second thing; he himself had an azurite vow, so he certainly wasn't anti-custom. Incidentally, the Judaisers are expedient. Liars are always expedient. Liars say whatever you got to say at the time. Know something interesting? In Galatians 5:11, the Judaisers accused Paul of teaching circumcision. That's right.

In Galatians 5:11, they accuse him of teaching circumcision. In Acts 21, they accuse him of not teaching circumcision. They said whatever was expedient to say. They're liars. Satan is a liar, and anybody that works for him is a liar. Well, that was pretty strong accusation, and they could see a real problem because here comes Paul, and they want to lift Paul up and have the people respond to him and respect him, and these people are all saying, "This guy is anti-Jewish. This guy is anti-Semitic. He's anti-law. He's anti-temple. He's such and such."

So it was a real concern. So they're in a dilemma. So what happens? Verse 22 says, "What is it therefore?" In my bible, translation should be what is to be done. What is to be done? Now, they're so wrong about Paul. Paul had already written the book of Romans, and he wrote it from Corinth before he ever got to Jerusalem. And in the book of Romans, he said this: He said, "Look, if a Jew wants to observe the day, that's no big deal. Let them observe it." Right? And if a Jew doesn't want to eat certain things, don't force him. You that are strong, don't oppress the weak. Let him grow up." He said, "For some, it's a problem. For others, it's not. Let's stoop to the weaker brother. Let's not offend him."

And I think that's an important principle. Paul had already established that we should condescend to the Jew who still wants to follow the customs; be loving, be kind to him, because it's harmless. Don't force him to violate his conscience. Feel guilty." So they say, "What are we going to do now?" Verse 22, "The people think this about you, and the multitude will come together because they'll hear you're here." When they hear you are in town, they're going to come together, and they're going to say, "Hey, hey, this is the guy. We've heard about him." And man alive, these elders said, "This is a potential bomb. This thing could blow sky-high. We've got tens of thousands of Christians who have been drilled that you're an apostate."

So they come up with a compromise. When I mention the word compromise, that's the third point. There are some people who react negatively because you think of the term compromise, in its negative sense. And I do, too. I grant you that most of the time when I think of the word compromise, I think of it as a negative. In fact, I heard a commentator on television the other day say that he could never be a politician because politics is the art of compromise and he can't compromise. The compromise we think of, I think frequently, as a negative thing where you sacrifice truth for the sake of expediency, or whether your method supersedes truth.

I had a report from someone who came back from mission enterprise this summer, and said to me, "I left this missionary enterprise," and he reflected on some problems. And one of the statements that he made was the leaders said, "Yes, we do have to go against the will of God sometimes to accomplish our purposes." That's compromise in its worst way. To violate truth, to teach truth, is impossible.

Well, we're not talking about compromise necessarily in a negative way. Just take it as a neutral, okay? Just compromise. Sometimes we have to compromise a little bit. Maybe your wife says, "I want the pizza with the pepperoni." And you say, "I want the pizza with anchovies." And you stand there yelling at each other in the pizza parlor. And in most pizza parlors, you'd fit right in; everybody is yelling anyway. But maybe you've got to compromise and get sausage, you know?

So there's a sense in which the word compromise can have a very neutral or inconsequential, or even positive thing. Sometimes you can make a compromise that's a very loving act. Verses 23 to 26; and they already have this compromise thing figured out in their minds. So they just lay it on him. "Do therefore this that we say unto thee." Kind of interesting, the transition in the church. First the apostles rule, then they raised up elders. Then they were apostles and elders. Now they're elders telling apostles what to do. That's progress, I guess.

But anyway, "Do therefore this that we say," That's _____ imperative, which means they command. "Do it." Interesting, they understood their authority, didn't they? Because me, the elders have authority. Now _____ here's what you're going to do: We have four men who have a vow on them. You say, "What is that?" Well, this is a Nazarite vow, and when I think of Nazarite, that doesn't mean Nazarene. Nazareth is the town from which Nazarenes come. A Nazarite is a different word; Nazare, and it has to do with separation. It means separate.

A Nazarite vow comes from chapter 6. God said that when any Jew wants to separate himself totally under the Lord, he takes a vow. And in effect, he says, "I am separated totally unto You, God." You can read all about it in Numbers 6. And I'm separating myself totally unto You. Now, as a symbol of the separation, one, he would restrain himself from drink. That means he would sacrifice the joy of life. That was a symbol of the joy of life. He wouldn't go to parties anymore, if you want to put it that way. He would restrict himself to the serious matters of life. Second thing; he let his hair grown long. And the bible does teach him in the New Testament that man's hair, when it is long and like a woman's hair, is a reproach to him.

And so what this was doing when you let the hair grow long, was you're accepting a reproach. And was it the normal thing for a man to do that? You are saying, "I will not party it up, and I will accept reproach." I will separate myself from all of the world's acclaim, and all of the world's fun, and I will give myself to God." And these two things were symbolic of such separation, and it really was a

beautiful thing.

You could still do it today. It could have significance if your heart was true. If you're really worshipping out of spirit and truth, you can still take such a thing and say, "I'll not go to those kind of functions, and I'll dress in a rather modest fashion and such and such, that I might not be looked on as somebody fashionable," etcetera. And if you wanted to express your vow in a Nazarite way, I'm sure God wouldn't get all upset in heaven, and say, "What's he doing? What's he doing?" I'm sure that if your heart was right, it would be inconsequential what the form was, right.

Okay, so that's what these guys were doing. They were just saying, "God, we want to separate You." Now there are some Nazarites in the bible, Sampson, Samuel and John the Baptist. But mostly people took a Nazarite vow 30, 60 or 90 days. During that time, they followed this thing. And then at the end of it, they had to make sacrifice, shave their head, take their hair to the temple, and offer a he-lamb, and she-lamb, some other things; a meal offering, and drink offering. It's all in Numbers 6.

So these people had taken the vow. Four guys had taken this thing, and they were getting to the end of it. And it was also true that if while you were a Nazarite, you touched a dead body, you contacted a defilement. You had to have a seven-day purification. In fact, it even says in Numbers 6 that if somebody dies right near you, and you catch them on the way down, that constitutes impurity.

So these fellows, and I'm not sure of all the details of this; they're not that clear. But these fellows were in the midst of this purification process within a Nazarite vow. And so here they are. So they say to Paul, "Now, look, Paul," verse 24, "take them and purify yourself with them." In other words, march on down to the temple and go through the whole seven-day route. Well, you say, "What in the world? Why would I want to do that?" Simply this: If you do that, the people are going to think that you really are plus on the side of Jewish custom. They're going to think Paul still circumscribed a Jewish custom. All that stuff the Judaizers have been teaching us is bologna. Look at him. He's down at the temple doing that thing. Why, he's one of us. He goes along with Mosaic ceremony.

But some would've said, "Oh, he's just doing that to make us think he does." So they said, "Secondly, Paul, pay all their expenses." Now, that's a little more serious because before people, you've got to buy a lot of animals. There are a lot of animals involved. Could be as many as a dozen or more animals involved. And all the meal and drink? That's a lot of money to put out for all these guys.

And so if you did that, they would even be more convinced that he was for real because he didn't have a lot of money. You say, "Where did he get the money he did have?" Well, he made tents along the way. He probably kept a little bit for just such a time as this. You know, it's a good thing to save a little bit so if God calls on you to do something you didn't expect to do, you got the money to do it. Good principle.

So anyway, he was ready to do it, and so that they may shave their heads and all may know that those things of which they were drilled about you are nothing, but that you do walk orderly and keep the ceremonies. You show those people by that behavior that it wasn't true what they said about you, but that you are one who is faithful to Mosaic ceremony.

Now, in a sense, it's a compromise because I don't think Paul felt that it was an absolute necessity, but he was willing to listen to them. And he could see that maybe there's the possibility of winning some people over on this basis. And man, anything that I could do to win people over; to make unity in the church. Paul loved unity in the church. This is what Jesus prayed for. And if there was a friction and he was on the outs with the church, I think he would do anything. Watch, "Within the bounds of truth that didn't violate doctrine to accomplish his goal." And so this certainly doesn't violate any doctrine just going through the ceremony. It's rather inconsequential, and I'm sure God looked at their hearts. And if their hearts were really separated and really pure, I'm sure God was pleased, even though the form was strictly Jewish.

And so the Apostle Paul is asked to do this. Now, they want to make one thing clear, which they make very clear in verse 25. And it is this: "As touching the Gentiles who believe we have written and concluded that they observed no such thing." Now the written and concluded was in Acts 15, in the Jerusalem Council, and they make this clear. "Look, Paul, we're not saying that everybody has to follow these things, because we've already written and concluded in the Council in Jerusalem, in Acts 15, that the Gentiles don't have to observe any of this stuff. Remember, they said, "All Gentiles need to be careful about is to keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from being strangled and from fornication or sexual sin." Why? Because those were the most offensive things to Jews.

And you remember the Jerusalem Council? They decided that no Gentile needed to be circumcised, no Gentile needed to keep the ceremonies. No Gentile needed to keep the law to be saved, but they needed to do these things in order to maintain open communication with the Jews. Because if the Gentiles ate the wrong foods, and drank blood, and did all the things that they used to do connected with their pagan religion, they'd make the Jews stumble. So they were saying in effect, "You don't have to become Jews, but just avoid doing those things that are going to offend the Jews in your midst." That's a simple principle, isn't it?

So they make clear that this isn't for Gentiles, only for Jews. So on behalf of those Jews, they say - now follow me, on behalf of those Jews who are Christians but are hung on the law who think you are anti-law, Paul, do this. We're not talking about the Gentiles at all. We don't even want to put this kind of burden on them. We've already covered that in the Council of Jerusalem. Avoid a few things in order to enhance their testimony.

Now what is Paul going to do? Well, look at verse 26, "Then Paul took them in, the four of them, and next day purifying himself with them, entered into the temple to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification." It was seven days, so they went in there to fill out the seven days, "until such a time as the offering could be offered for everyone."

Paul jumped right in. He didn't argue. Didn't say a word. Just went along with the compromise. Now, this brings up a very interesting point. Was it a mistake? Did Paul really do something wrong? Did he compromise when he shouldn't have compromised? Was this an evil act?

Some say he definitely did. G. Campbell Morgan, and I am quoting. Listen to what he said, "I hold that Paul made the greatest mistake of his ministry on this occasion. Yet we have to recognize that the reason of his consent was not that of expediency, not that of policy, but that of devotion and his desire to win his brethren."

"This was not the act of a man trying to save his own life. It was the action of a man who compassionately and earnestly desired to do anything to win his brethren. He sought by that compromise contrary to his own conviction, to gain an opportunity. His brethren were not one and the last word of the paragraph is the same cry hurled after him and that hurled after his Messiah, away with Him."

"Men who would never compromise in order to save their own lives are in danger of compromising in the hope that they help save others." So Morgan says that he went against his own conscience, and that he compromised by acquiescing to Judaism when he should not have done it, and it was an evil compromise. And as a result, it didn't work, and he was put in prison. Is that true?

Well, it gives you something to think about. He became victimized by an angry mob. And I believe this point people: I believe it's wrong to compromise truth for the sake of the method, don't you? And there are an awful lot of people that do that. Man, they've got a goal, and they'll compromise anyway they have to get there.

But is that this kind of compromise? Did Paul violate his conscience? I don't think so. I don't agree with Morgan at all. And the reason I don't agree with him? One, I don't think he violated his conscience, because in chapter 18, he himself took a Nazarite vow, right? Chapter 18, verse 18, "He had his own head shorn and followed through his own vow."

So even Paul had still hanging onto him clothes from his Judaistic days. I don't think he was violating his conscience at all. Secondly, if this was the greatest mistake he ever made, I think the Holy Spirit would've said something about it. The Holy Spirit is not prone to let sin go by without comment. At least I've found in my life that He comments when sin comes up, and I can't imagine sins of such

proportion as this and a perfect time to teach the doctrine of compromise that the Holy Spirit wouldn't have capitalized on, had it indeed been a compromise.

The third thing is this: I don't think there was anything evil in doing what he did. I think what he did was a form of tradition. It was a cultural thing. It was a ceremonial thing. It was not a fact of sin or not sin. It was just a way of expression. Let me add this: I think his motives were pure. Paul wanted the unity of the fellowship. Let me give you a little thought. You take pure motive and add to absolute doctrine knowledge, and you equal righteous acts.

When a man has pure motives and total knowledge of doctrine, his act will be pure. Paul had pure motives, total knowledge of doctrine. He's going to have a righteous act. I think it was a righteous act. I think his purpose was good, and he's in the frames of his own truth. And let me add this: They say, "Well, what about the results?" You don't know what the results were. The only thing you see here is the riot that happens from the unbelievers. You don't know what the results were to the Christian Jews who were the issue.

Perhaps they all said, "Wonderful." Perhaps he won them over. But you can't conclude that with the godly. Let me give you another thought. I think it's a good illustration to the elders, which becomes a New Testament principle. I think Paul submitted himself to the elders to set a pattern for all future church activity. When the elders said, "Do this," he did it.

And I'll add another thought. I think Paul, in his own ministry, was committed to such positive kind of compromises. Listen to these words, 1 Corinthians 9:19, "For though I'm free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all that I might gain the more." Listen, "Under the Jews, I became like a Jew that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law, Gentiles, I became as without law that I might gain them that are without. To the weak, I became weak that I might gain the weak. I made all things to all men that I might by all means save some."

Who are the weak? Legalists. He said, "I became a Jew as to win Jews." Not that he sacrificed truth; it was a question of method of cultural adaptation. I moved into what they were. That was his way. I don't think he compromised in a negative sense.

So we have the communion, and the concern, and the compromise. What were the consequences? Well, we'll get into these in detail next time. But the consequences were in verses 27 to 36, "A riot." A riot started out, and I mean it was one full-scale riot.

But what is interesting, and I just want to draw this quickly. Listen. What was interesting in this whole deal about the riot was that everybody was screaming their heads off. In fact, the Romans finally came running down the steps of Fort Antonius and scooped Paul out of the middle of the gang and

tried to save his life. It was such a big mess; they couldn't get him out of the crowd. They had to lift him up and carry him. They tried to get through the steps. The people were all screaming.

So the Roman, chiliarch, the guy who was the commander of the thousand, the head man, he starts yelling out, "What did he do? What are you killing him for?" And he got so many answers. He was so confused. He couldn't understand anything. He just hauled him off and put him in the barracks. The mob was so messed up and confused, and they were yelling all kinds of things, and nobody knew what was going on. And the interesting thing about it is through the entire thing, from beginning to end, Paul never says a word. He didn't say anything. He wasn't standing there screaming, "I didn't do anything." He didn't say anything.

So what does that prove? I think it just adds support to our overall theme. And what's our overall theme? The measure of the man is what? Humility. You say, "John, how do you see the humility in a man?" I'll just give you those three things I gave you at the bottom of the outline. Listen to them. I see in this beautiful passage the humility of Paul three ways. Number one, verses 19 and 20, "His submission before God. He was humble before God." When he came to give his report, he said, "This is what God has done." That's humility.

Second, he humbled himself before Christian authority. The elders said, "Do this." He did it. Thirdly, he even humbled himself to suffer the pain of persecution. Why? Because it was God's will, was it not? Didn't the Holy Spirit say, "It's going to happen. It's going to happen." When it happened, he was silent.

Beloved, humility is when I am humbling before God, humbling before the leaders of the church who are an authority over me, and humbling myself before the persecution of the world. Because my Lord said it would happen if I lived a godly life. That's true humility. That's the measure to the man.

Father, thank You for our time together this morning in sharing of the Word. We thank You that You have shown us again the importance of humility. And Father, we see such a great man as Paul, and perhaps we're prone to say, "What were the keys to success? How did he ever get to be so great? How did he ever get to be such a fantastic man." The Word will tell you us have to build yourself up, and you have to do this and that. And the Word of God says you have to tear yourself down and be nothing.

And Paul himself said, "When I am weak, then I am strong. I glory in infirmities." God, we pray that we would be humbled so that we could be exalted, broken so that we could be mended, and used of Thee. Teach us humility before You, before the church, before the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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