

## Lesson 9 30 December, 2018

### Paul Assaulted in the Temple

**Lesson Scope:** Acts 21:10-40

*References in brackets refer to Acts 21 unless otherwise specified*

#### Lesson Focus

As his third missionary journey came to a close, Paul set his attention on going to Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost and to deliver the gift of money from the Gentile churches to the church at Jerusalem. Paul was determined to make this trip in spite of the fact that his brethren advised him not to go. They feared for his life. They did not want to lose a beloved brother.

Paul did not close his eyes to the dangers he knew he would face at Jerusalem. He stated that he was willing to suffer not only bonds and imprisonment, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. Seeing his steadfast determination, his brethren ceased their efforts to persuade him and said, “The will of the Lord be done” (21:14).

In retrospect, we can see that Paul’s imprisonment opened a new mission field for him. During his time in prison at Rome, Paul wrote epistles, which have been a blessing to the churches for centuries. Paul was ready either to live or die for the Lord he loved so much.

The Christian is “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” With divine truth burning in his heart, he “cannot but speak the things which [he has] seen and heard.”

Wearying journeys, imprisonments, beatings, stonings, and angry mobs did not diminish Paul’s zeal for the work of spreading the Gospel. Allow Paul’s fortitude, untiring commitment, and strong courage to inspire you. Hold up his example before yourself and others to prod them to overcome their feelings of inadequacy and timidity.

Remember that some of the difficulties the church faced in the time of the apostles related to the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament. It took patience on the part of all involved to make this transition

**Lesson Aim:** To portray involvements of being a witness for the Lord.

**Theme Verse:** **Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

## Lesson Text

### Submitted to God's Will

**Acts 21:10-14**

<sup>10</sup> (KJV) And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. <sup>11</sup> And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles. <sup>12</sup> And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>14</sup> And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

### Willing to Communicate

**Acts 21:17-24**

<sup>17</sup> (KJV) And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. <sup>18</sup> And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. <sup>19</sup> And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. <sup>20</sup> And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: <sup>21</sup> 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 customs. <sup>22</sup> What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. <sup>23</sup> Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; <sup>24</sup> Them take, 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; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

### **Steadfast in Crisis**

Acts 21:27-33

27 (KJV)

And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, <sup>28</sup> Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all *men* every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. <sup>29</sup> (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) <sup>30</sup> And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. <sup>31</sup> And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. <sup>32</sup> Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. <sup>33</sup> 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 had done.

Acts 21:40

40 (KJV)

and when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* in the Hebrew tongue...

### **Questions for Study**

#### **Submitted to God's Will**

1. For what reasons did Paul's brethren beg him not to go to Jerusalem?
2. Why did Paul feel confident that he should go to Jerusalem in spite of what he knew he would encounter there?
3. What facts help us find rest when we face a crisis?

#### **Willing to Communicate**

4. What were the benefits of Paul's report of his work to the leaders at Jerusalem?
5. What good can we expect from our efforts to clear misunderstandings?

## **Steadfast in Crisis**

6. Why did the unbelieving Jews seek to kill Paul?
7. What was Paul's response to the violence in the temple?
8. What promises of God can we claim in times of crisis?

## **Analysing the Passage**

Through Agabus it was revealed that Paul would be bound by the Jews at Jerusalem. Paul did not let that deter him from his purpose. He knew that the cause of Christ could be furthered by his death as well as by his life. His brethren acknowledged this and were submitted to God's will.

At Jerusalem Paul spoke with James and the elders, reporting in detail his previous work. They were glad to hear of Paul's successful work among the Gentiles. However, the report that Paul was teaching Jewish believers to forsake the law of Moses, particularly in the matter of circumcision, and not to walk after the customs gave them concern. They directed Paul to take steps to clear himself of this charge. The large number of Jews gathered at Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost made this an optimum occasion for Paul to clarify this.

After the days of purification, unbelieving Jews created an uproar in the temple, which spread to the whole city. The Jews took Paul and were about to kill him. The Roman officials intervened and spared him, giving him an opportunity to speak and testify for Christ.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Submitted to God's Will**

God's leading is essential for witnessing for Him (21:11).

As Christians are involved in the work of witnessing for Christ, they look to God to lead them to the people and places He knows should receive their witness. They leave the choice of place up to God and follow where He leads them, not hesitating due to perceived difficulties.

2. A faithful witness must be prepared to die for his faith (21:13).

Paul's statement in this verse is a key to this passage. Was Paul foolish to walk into a danger zone when he had been warned about the outcome? No. His strong faith in God led him to trust that God could protect him if He willed, or He could accomplish His purpose through Paul's death.

3. A faithful witness finds rest in God's sovereign will (21:14).

Paul's resignation to God's will helped his brethren to accept the results of that choice as the will of God. Rather than worrying about the future, believers can rest, knowing that God knows best and that He can control future events to carry out His will.

### **Willing to Communicate**

4. God's people rejoice in the witness of faithful men (21:17-20).

Paul's report of his work among the Gentiles brought joy to the Christians at Jerusalem. Similar reports come to us today from distant places where successful mission work is being carried out. This strengthens brotherhood ties and builds support from the sending church.

5. A witness for the truth will seek to avoid misunderstandings or offenses (21:21-23).

Paul aimed to give a clear presentation of truth and to confirm it by living by Biblical principle. He was willing to do what his brethren recommended in order to clear suspicions regarding his work. Sometimes we may need to do what would seem to be unnecessary in order to clear misunderstandings.

### **Steadfast in Crisis**

6. Facing violence and false accusation meekly is a witness of God's indwelling (21:27-28). God can give us calm in the face of violence. What appears to be out of control from our perspective is always in God's control. God was with Paul in this crisis and He has promised never to leave us or forsake us. God's grace is sufficient and His everlasting arms are beneath us.

7. God's presence is with those who suffer for Him (21:31-32).

God is interested in preserving His people. He has commissioned His angels to guard them. See Psalm 34:7; Psalm 91:11-12; and Hebrews 1:13-14. He can move the hearts of kings and rulers to act in behalf of His people. God will not permit any trials to overtake us that are greater than His people can bear.

8. A faithful witness is ready to speak for his Lord at any time (21:40).

Paul used the opportunities whenever they came. He trusted God to open doors for him. Though this was a time of crisis and not a particularly ideal time and place to witness, Paul seized the moment and spoke for his Lord.

9. Opposition should not change our desire for the salvation of men's souls (21:40).

Paul could have focused on the opposition he was facing. He could have pitied himself and used the difficulty as an excuse for not giving a witness. Instead, he used it as an occasion to carry on his consuming desire to declare the Gospel.

### **Important Teachings**

1. God's leading is essential for witnessing for Him (21:11).
2. A faithful witness must be prepared to die for his faith (21:13).
3. A faithful witness finds rest in God's sovereign will (21:14).
4. God's people rejoice in the witness of faithful men (21:17-20).
5. A witness for the truth will seek to avoid misunderstandings or offenses (21:21-23).
6. Facing violence and false accusation meekly is a witness of God's indwelling (21:27-28).
7. God's presence is with those who suffer for Him (21:31-32).
8. A faithful witness is ready to speak for his Lord at any time (21:40).
9. Opposition should not change our desire for the salvation of men's souls (21:40).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. For what reasons did Paul's brethren beg him not to go to Jerusalem? The Holy Ghost had revealed what awaited Paul if he went to Jerusalem. Fearing for his personal safety and for his life, his brethren strongly urged him not to go. They wanted to spare him these difficulties. They did not want to lose such a dear brother and faithful church leader.
2. Why did Paul feel confident that he should go to Jerusalem in spite of what he knew he would encounter there?  
He was willing both to suffer and to die for the name of Jesus because Jesus had suffered and died for him. He also was confident that God was able to deliver him from the hands of those who sought to harm him. He committed his future into God's hands.
3. What facts help us to find rest when we face a crisis?  
We should remember that God is always with us through a crisis. No crisis will occur out of which God is unable to deliver us. We can rest that He will use it for His glory.
4. What were the benefits of Paul's report of his work to the leaders at Jerusalem?

It showed Paul's respect for the sending church. The believers had received the Holy Ghost at Jerusalem, and from this place the work spread to other parts of the world. It strengthened the ties of brotherhood for Paul to inform them of his work in other places. It gave them all an opportunity to evaluate their methods of and approach to mission work and serve as an aid in planning for future work.

5. What good can we expect from our efforts to clear misunderstandings?

The work of the church can go on after misunderstandings are cleared. As long as the misunderstandings remain, working relationships will be hindered and the work could falter or even come to a halt. We build confidence when we approach a problem resulting from misunderstandings by assuming that neither party is necessarily at fault. Brotherhood ties become stronger when we refrain from assigning improper motives to others' actions.

6. Why did the unbelieving Jews seek to kill Paul?

They accused him of teaching against the Jews, their law, and their temple. They had seen Paul with a Greek in the city and charged him with bringing Greeks into the temple, polluting it.

7. What was Paul's response to the violence in the temple?

He followed Jesus' example and did not use force to defend himself. We have no record of any words Paul spoke against them. When he was given permission to speak, he gave a testimony for Christ rather than to attack those who tried to kill him.

8. What promises of God can we claim in times of crisis?

We can claim God's presence. He goes with us through the valley of the shadow of death. We can claim God's protection because He is stronger than any foe who comes against us. We can claim God's promise of future reward if we endure faithfully until death.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Paul is a fine example of the way a faithful witness carries out his work. He was zealous, he possessed a spirit of cooperation, he was willing to communicate, he was eager to clear up misunderstandings, and he was always ready to use any opportunities to give a witness. God can help anyone to develop these virtues when they desire to walk close to Him and do His work.

## **Research Guide**

1. Read Acts 9:15-16, where God gave Ananias a summary of the work He had for Paul.
2. Read Romans 14, where Paul explains how to show regard for a weaker brother to avoid offending him. The examples given in this chapter relate to Jewish customs.
3. Read Philippians 1:12-14, where Paul listed the positive results of his imprisonment