

Scripture Reading:

Acts 21:26 “Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them. 27 Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." 29 (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) 30 And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. 31 Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. 34 And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. 35 When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"”

'Paul Causes an Uproar'

The Apostle Paul came to Jerusalem for some very good reasons:

- 1) He wanted to make sure that the offerings collected by the various Gentile Churches were delivered.
- 2) He wanted to report on the advance of the Gospel among the Gentiles.
- 3) And remembering how he poured out his heart for his people in the Book of Romans, we know that he wanted another opportunity to share the Gospel with his Jewish brethren gathered for Pentecost.

Paul did not come looking for trouble, but now he has caused an uproar!

Now I don't think that we have any trouble-makers here at Church of the King... I don't know of any of you who go looking to make trouble.

- So I guess our basic application this morning is going to be to learn that even well-intentioned Christians will cause some uproars & how we are to handle them!
- Since we live in a fallen world, those uproars may occur in our families, the Church and certainly in our neighborhoods and work places.

The Apostle Paul had clearly been warned that trouble lay ahead in this visit to Jerusalem... The Prophet Agabus even gave an illustrated sermon using Paul's belt to demonstrate what was going to occur and now we see the Jews causing Paul to be bound in chains. So was Paul just looking for trouble?

NO, because as I just pointed out, he had several important reasons for making this trip and in fact he did all he could to avoid trouble.

We studied how after Paul arrived, he went to great lengths to show that he was not wanting to cause trouble, even among those who were still zealous for the law.

- So the questions we should wrestle with are how did Paul get himself in so much trouble and how does it apply to our lives today?

Before we look at those important lessons for us, let us take a closer look at what happened to Paul...

Paul had agreed to help four men complete their Nazirite vows by paying for the expenses of the sacrifices required at the end of the vows. This brought Paul to the Temple and there he was spotted by those who knew him as their enemy: The hard-hearted Jews from Asia...

27 “Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, “Men of Israel, help!”

We have studied at length the trouble similar men had caused Paul in Asia and we cannot help but see how this riot in Jerusalem was very close to what happened in several Asian cities. The Apostle Paul is sharing a Gospel which they themselves should have seen from the Scriptures they claimed to love, but in their pride they had rejected it.

- Thus they cannot engage in meaningful dialog, but must attack Paul in much the same way they did Stephen about twenty years before.

And of course we see both men falsely accused and scornfully treated just as they did the Messiah: Something Jesus had told His followers would happen... The same type of false charges are leveled against Paul as we saw with Stephen and Jesus:

“This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” 29 (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)”

These men have no interest in real justice: They accuse Paul of being against the law at the very time he is upholding the law and they accuse him of bringing Gentiles into the Temple when in fact NO Gentiles are present, or had been present. *[mention the signs & penalty]*

They simply want Paul eliminated and call on the Jewish people to help: They sound what we would hear today as a call to ride the sound of the guns: It goes out from these Asian Jews and the entire city responds...

30 “And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.”

There are some very powerful images here that we should not miss:

- First and foremost as we often see, the Gospel disturbs people!

I am sure that the Apostle Paul would have had this event, as well as others, in mind when he later wrote in his second letter to the Saints at Corinth:

“2:14 “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. 15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? 17 For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.”

- Now of course we long to be the sweet smell of life and to bring people to Christ as their Savior.

However, we cannot avoid being the stench of death to those being lost, unless of course we simply refuse to be the witnesses we are to be for Jesus!

AND this is not simply street witnessing or even directly presenting the Gospel message...

- Paul was simply present and that brought the fragrance of Christ to the Temple!

IF we do not bring His fragrance wherever we go, then we are not His!

This is one of the important lessons that we need to learn from today's text! It is our very lives and presence that brings the fragrance of Jesus and it WILL bring mixed reactions...

- **Some will come to the life Jesus offers and others will shut the gates, just as these hardened Jews did that day at the Temple!**

As we have discussed, the destruction of this Temple and all of Jerusalem is now only about ten years away. Jesus had foretold these events and warned His followers that they must be prepared to flee when the time came. Perhaps this final uproar revolving around Paul was used by God as part of that preparation for those Saints who were zealous for the law that we considered last week.

We should not miss the irony that these hardened Jews here shut the gates against Paul and the Gentiles...

- **The very Gentiles who would soon destroy this very Temple**
- **AND God's messenger who could have given them life!**

We also see a stark contrast with the gates being slammed shut here at the old temple as compared to the gates of the New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb as the Church is described in Revelation chapter 21:

"2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband... 12 Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ... 21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. 22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. 24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). 26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it."

The Apostle Paul was being accused of bringing Gentiles into God's Temple and now the Temple police had slammed shut the gates to make sure it was kept pure... In Revelation, John sees the Lamb's Bride as a glorious city where the gates were never shut, but always welcoming to the nations of the earth.

Jesus commanded us to disciple the nations by bringing people to Jesus for salvation, baptizing them and teaching them to obey all things He commanded.

- **We are bringing forth the new creation: As Paul declares in his 2nd Letter to the Church at Corinth...**

II Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

- **We are the ambassadors who invite people to come to the New Jerusalem, the City where the gates are never shut!**

As we go forth as the fragrance of Jesus some will not be happy and we too will face the kinds of trials that Paul is facing here in Jerusalem. These trials should NOT surprise us and we must remember that God is in control... Even when things appear to be VERY out of control as I am sure they seemed to Paul at this very moment.

Paul had told the Saints at Caesarea after Agabus did his illustrated sermon, that he was not only prepared to be persecuted in Jerusalem but to even die for the sake of the Gospel...

- From a human standpoint I am pretty sure Paul may have been thinking that his time had come...
- But, God had other plans!

31 “Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.”

- Paul’s help comes from a very unexpected quarter: The Romans!

Paul had recently written to the Saints at Rome those comforting words of Romans 8:28

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

God used these hard-hearted Jews to cause an uproar that would lead to the arrest of Paul: God would also use the power of Rome to protect Paul from certain death and to deliver him to Rome...

- The very city that he desired to visit and the city where his final witness went forth to all the world.

Neither this commander nor the crowds understood the roles they were playing as we can see from the text:

33 “Then the commander came near and took him, & commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. 34 And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. 35 When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, “Away with him!””

We will learn next week that this commander was sure Paul was a different trouble-maker and we can see from our text this morning that the mob was, well, just a mob...

- Not really knowing why they were so worked up!
- Not unlike the ‘Arab spring.’

So what are the lessons that we should take away from this uproar that Paul has caused by trying to do the right things at the Temple?

Paul had followed his own admonition in Romans 12 and tried to be at peace with all men!

- Obviously, following this command does not assure that all will be peaceful.

I think it is important to remember at this point that it is easy to be a trouble-maker:

We have seen this in our nation in recent months as protestors around the country have occupied various things in order to cause trouble.

- This is NOT what we are called upon to do!

The Apostle Paul could easily have caused this riot by marching into the Temple with his Gentile companions and proclaiming that they must be allowed into God’s Kingdom!

- While the message may have been true, the actions would not have been productive, nor God’s plan.

Instead, Paul followed the more difficult path of obedience, trying to be at peace with all men. This event reminds us why Paul qualified that command with, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you.” So let me share a few examples of how we are to not be trouble-makers and yet can often find ourselves in the midst of an uproar.

[If you think these examples are NOT the same as what Paul experienced, then you have forgotten how much God has blessed our nation: Such examples in other parts of the world would be just as violent, and they may be here as well if we don’t soon repent!]

You are an employee who has various duties to carry out at your workplace. Taking your fifteen minute break in the morning to stand on your desk and proclaim the Gospel to your fellow-workers would certainly cause an uproar... And likely get you fired.

- **That would be causing trouble and is certainly NOT God's plan!**

However, there may be times when even an employee who goes out of his or her way to be at peace with everyone finds themselves in trouble because a fellow worker has taken offense at a conversation about the Gospel that you had with another worker in the break room or a boss has asked you to do something that is a violation of God's Law.

You may end up causing an uproar by doing what is right, but it is not because you are a trouble-maker:

- **And you can rest in the knowledge that God will work all of it together for your good and the good of others in His Kingdom.**

We can see another example when it comes to how we oppose the sin of homosexuality in our land. There is a small church in Kansas that makes a point of protesting at the funerals of soldiers killed in battle claiming that they died as part of God's judgment on our nation.

- **These are trouble makers!**

On the other hand, we are a Church that clearly preaches against the sin of homosexuality and even includes a vow to publically stand against such sins in our membership vows. We may find ourselves someday facing an ACLU lawyer accusing us of hate crimes and there might be quite an uproar when we refuse to back down. Again, we would refuse to back down because we are being faithful to God's Word and NOT because we are trouble-makers!

- **And we could also rest in the knowledge that God will work all of it together for our good and the good of others in God's Kingdom.**

We can see another example of this on the domestic front with child-rearing.

If a young mother has a child disobey in a crowded supermarket and immediately takes out a rod and pulls down their pants right there in public: I would argue she is being a trouble-maker... And she will likely be in LOTS of trouble in short order.

However, even the parent who is diligent with both the consistency and proper handling of discipline for their child can still find themselves with quite an uproar on their hands when Suzie or Johnny decides to pick a major power battle right in the middle of the family reunion.

Even the most discrete, but repeated applications of the board of education could lead to your actions being the talk of the whole reunion and often with some very heated reactions.

- **Again, this is not being a trouble maker but another situation where our faithful actions find us in the midst of an uproar, just as happened with Paul in today's text.**

And as we strive to train the future leaders that our nation desperately needs, we must help them realize that this will often happen in the public square as well.

It is interesting that the unbelieving Jews and Christians there are Jerusalem seem to have figured out how to co-exist for a number of years.

Yet, along comes the Apostle Paul and he becomes a bit of a lightning rod causing a BIG uproar with actions that were no different than what many other Christians there at the time may have done at the Temple.

We see that today with men like Dr. James Dobson. He is a very nice man and many of his views are held by large majorities in our nation. Yet, because he has used his influence to impact public opinion on issues like home-schooling, abortion or Biblical marriage he is hated by the secular elites. A simple statement of support or opposition by him for a particular candidate or measure can cause quite an uproar!

- **NOT because Dr. Dobson is a trouble maker, but because he has been so faithful to God's Word in many areas.**
- **Paul is now in Jerusalem and he has caused quite an uproar.**

As we move on in Acts we will see that it was God's plan for Paul and this should be a great encouragement for us when things seem to be getting out of control in our lives and there are no obvious sins to confess.

In the coming weeks we will see that Paul spends over two years in jail and for the most part is going it alone: Luke does not refer to their actions together again until he says 'it was determined that we should sail to Italy' at the beginning of chapter 27.

During this time, I am sure that Paul drew much comfort from the Psalms, knowing that it would be God who would deliver him from his enemies just as he had David and the other Saints of the Old Testament.

- **We should learn to do the same!**

Please know that we do NOT want trouble-makers here at Church of the King...

And Lord-willing Theron or I will be quick to deal with any who take that wrong path.

At the same time we must not be surprised to see some or all of you causing an uproar at times...

And don't think it will always be the obvious ones, like my being in this pulpit or Steve's ministry on campuses.

- **God may choose any of us who are walking faithfully in His ways as the righteous cause of an uproar that in the end is part of His plan to bless His people and fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus!**

Communion Meditation: Leviticus 2:

" 'When anyone offers a grain offering to Jehovah, his offering shall be of fine flour. And he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it. 2 He shall bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests, one of whom shall take from it his handful of fine flour and oil with all the frankincense. And the priest shall burn it as a memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to Jehovah.