

Introduction. We now come to the concluding chapters of the book of Acts. When I began to meditate on this ending deeply, it seemed very strange to me. A book that began with Jesus ascending into Heaven and speaking of the gift of the Holy Ghost and the spreading of the Gospel to the ends of the world—this book with such a glorious beginning, ends with the greatest of the missionaries as a prisoner in Rome, shortly to be beheaded through the influence of the Jews.

So, over the next several weeks, I want to walk through these last chapters of Acts to try to see the meaning and the purpose of the Holy Spirit who worked in Luke to give the church this account of the works of Christ through His apostles; as he says in chapter one: that this book is the continuation of the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel was the account of the things that Jesus began to do and teach until His receiving up into heaven.

The book of Acts, then, is an account of the work of Jesus Christ from heaven, and is evidence of His ascension into Heaven and the sending of the Holy Ghost to accomplish this work.

Today I am going to present the proposition that the events of Chapters 21 and 22 are examples that Paul actually practiced what he preached, according to two different places:

1. Php 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. Paul bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. He wrote these words to the Philippians from Rome as was the book to the Galatians.
2. Romans 12:1, 2. "1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Ro 12:1-2) This is the logical and spiritual requirement of the doctrines that Paul had explained in the first eleven chapters of Romans. That we are not our own, either in body or soul, but we belong to Christ who purchased us, and we are to be willing to give ourselves up to Christ, both in life and in death.

- I. Presenting the Body as a Sacrifice Illustrated. Acts 21:13-40. Being All Things to All men.
  - A. Paul knew the dangers he faced at Jerusalem. Years before, he had been warned of God to make haste and get out of Jerusalem, for they would not receive his testimony. 22:18
  - B. So, it took two special messages from God for Paul to go willing to Jerusalem; the command to go, and the command to go even though he faced bonds and perhaps death. Those he did receive, directly from God and from faithful prophets like Agabus;. He needed to be fortified for this work. It is wrong to run willingly into danger; but it is also wrong to shrink from danger when the Lord requires us to go forward. Not only Paul, but other disciples went with him to Jerusalem.
  - C. His great wisdom in Jerusalem; he did not act the fool.
    1. He met with the James and the elders.

2. He took the advice of James and the elders, so as not to offend the thousands of Jews that believed. There were spurious rumors about the teaching of Paul that needed to be laid to rest.
    - a. That the Gentiles were to forsake Moses.
    - b. That they were not to circumcise their children.
  3. The two extremes that Paul needed to navigate between, according to the elders:
    - a. That in rejecting the ceremonies, he was not rejecting Moses, but walked orderly. Vs. 24, keeping the substance of the law.
    - b. That the substance of the ceremonies is fulfilled in Christ.
  4. There must always be a difference made between the ceremony and the substance of the ceremony or we will go astray.
  5. As long as the temple still stood, it was possible to keep the ceremony and the substance, as when Paul circumcised Timothy on another visit. But the ceremony must always be rejected if it is identified with the substance. God had not yet demonstrated that worship was being taken from the temple, and Moses would be fulfilled in the church, without the ceremonies.
  6. The elders recognized the tension, in vs. 25, they reiterated the order to the Gentiles, in verse 25
- D. But just his presence in the temple, even after going through the rite of purification, did not satisfy the Jews and came upon him and began beating him. Those who saw nothing but the ceremony and the outward cleansing of the sepulcher could not bear even his presence in the temple. But they did take him outside, so as not to murder him in the temple!!
- E. Thus was the prophecy of Agabus fulfilled, for the Jews caused him to be bound and delivered to the Gentiles.
- II. The Body Bearing Witness. Acts 22:1-21 read.
- A. The physical, by itself, is not sufficient. There must reasons be given. Paul now explains why he was in the temple.
  - B. He spoke in Hebrew because he was addressing his countrymen, for whom he was ready to die.
  - C. He gave account of his persecution of Christians and his conversion on the road to Damascus.
  - D. He spoke of His baptism which washed away his sins vs. 16; hence, there was really no need of the rite of purification that he had just gone through; this was just an accommodation to the Jewish Christians. "I am all things to all men...." To the Jew I became as a Jew.. I became without law to those without law. Etc. Not absolutely without law<sup>19</sup> ¶  
For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might

gain the more. 20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

- E. He spoke of the martyrdom of Stephen and his persecution, but in a trance Jesus spoke to him to get out of Jerusalem, for God would send him to the Gentiles. Vs. 21
- F. This was more than bigotry could bear, and a riot ensued: vs. 22, 23 This was a knee jerk reaction to the world "Gentile," and they forgot that this was the mercy promised to Abraham, than in him all the families of the world would be blessed. But they couldn't stand the concept of the blessing in which they were not in control.

### III. The Beating and Binding of the Body

#### A. Part One by Bigotry: Acts 21:27-40

1. We saw in chapter 21, that Paul was beaten by the Jews because they thought he had brought gentiles into the temple. He hadn't, but truth didn't matter to them, nor to the mob that they had stirred up.
2. This was the first binding of Paul, binding with two chains. Rome didn't tolerate civil disturbances and local authorities were expected to tamp them down by whatever means necessary. They mostly considered that if you were at the center of a disturbance, then you must be guilty of something.

#### B. Part Two by Law : Acts 22:22-30

1. The second was by Roman law.
2. He would have been beaten, but he appealed to his Roman citizenship. It was illegal to beat a Roman without a trial. Nor was it legal to bind him.
3. Acts does not record it, but tradition has it that Paul released for a couple of years before his final imprisonment and death. He was tireless in preaching and teaching and the church was established everywhere.
4. Luke leaves off his account with Paul in house arrest, bound in Rome.

#### Application

1. The most important man in Rome at that time was the apostle Paul, for his teaching would change the course of history and lay the foundation for Western Civilization. Who would have thought it.
2. The kingdom does not come with outward show and pomp, but by obedient service to our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Only God knows the results of your ministry and work. Be faithful and give up yourselves to Christ. Willingly offer up your body to serve the Lord without reservation Live and speak the reality in Christ and not in vain show.
4. Romans 6:17-22. Servants of God: give yourselves up to Christ. Amen and Amen.