

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 66

I. Exposition of Chapter Twenty One (Continued).

A. **Verse 26 – Paul enters the Temple.** As was seen in verses 23-24, the leaders of the Jerusalem church were concerned about the rumors that had circulated around Jerusalem concerning Paul, accusing him of telling all the Jews to forsake the law. They persuaded Paul to take a vow of dedication to the law, along with four other men, which was intended to calm Paul's accusers. In this verse, we see Paul entering the temple in order to give a sacrificial offering while announcing the completion of his vow. Dr. Stanley Toussaint writes:

“Was Paul wrong in entering into this arrangement, which was a specific part of the Law? For several reasons it may be said he was not: (1) Paul himself had previously taken a Nazirite vow (Acts 18:18). (2) Later he unashamedly referred to this incident before Felix (24:17–18). (3) This action on Paul’s part only confirmed one of the principles of his ministry which was to become like a Jew to win the Jews, and to become like one under the Law to win those under it (1 Cor. 9:20). (4) One of Paul’s goals for the Jerusalem trip, along with relief of the poor, was the unifying of Jews and Gentiles. (5) Paul was not denying the finished work of Christ by offering animal sacrifices. The epistles Paul had already written by this time (Gal., 1 and 2 Thes., 1 and 2 Cor., Rom.) make it clear that such a denial was incomprehensible. He must have looked on these sacrifices as memorials. After all, this will be the significance of millennial sacrifices (Ezek. 43:18–46:24; Mal. 1:11; 3:3–4). (6) Paul later asserted he did not violate his own conscience (Acts 23:1)”¹

B. **Verses 27-30 – Jews from Asia stirred up the whole Crowd against Paul.** Remember “Asia” in Acts is not the continent but the Roman province that today would roughly include the eastern part of modern-day Turkey and had the city of Ephesus as its capital. Apparently, these “...Jews from Asia...” recognized Paul from when he was in Asia, particularly when he was at Ephesus where a riot rose up. Dr. Stanley Horton asserts:

“When the seven days of purification were almost completed, Jews from the Roman province of Asia were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. They may have been among those who ‘became obstinate; refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way’ (Acts 19:9). Paul had been ‘severely tested’ by their plots (20:19). They saw Paul in the temple and threw the whole crowd into confusion. Then they ‘seized’ him and shouted that he taught everyone everywhere ‘against our people and our law.’ Finally, they accused him of having ‘defiled this holy place’ by bringing in Greeks (i.e., Gentiles). ‘Holy place’ meant the inner courts of the temple. Greeks could go only as far as the Court of the Gentiles.”²

1. **Verse 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.”** Grant Osborne gives insights:

“So there were two charges, the first the same one often leveled against him, that he was teaching ‘everyone everywhere against our people and our law and this place’... and the second that he was desecrating the temple with Trophimus...The first general charge actually has three segments, as he supposedly defiled with his teaching first the Jewish people (that they are no longer the covenant people but sinners like the Gentiles), then the Mosaic law (saying it no longer governed the people of God), and finally the temple itself (as no longer the dwelling place of God).”³

a. The New Covenant teaches that every person is equally a sinner and needs God's grace – **Romans 3:9-20.**

b. The New Covenant also teaches that the believer is no longer to be governed by the law but by the love of God in our hearts – **Romans 13:8-10.**

c. And, the New Covenant teaches that the believer is the temple of God - **I Corinthians 3:16-17; II Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21.**

2. **Verse 30 – “And all the city was disturbed...”** The word “disturbed” means; **“to cause people to riot against—to stir up against, to start a riot, to cause an uproar.”⁴** The Amplified Bible adds the idea of being **“...thrown into confusion...”** (cf. **Acts 13:42-45; James 3:13-16**). This uproar and confusion was the result of envy. Envy is defined as **“A desire for another’s gifts,**

¹Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 416.

²Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 353-354.

³Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 386-387.

⁴Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 497-498.

possessions, position or achievements, closely associated with jealousy.”⁵

3. “...seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.” – There was a great deal of anger and violence in the hearts of these people. The word “**dragged**” means; “**to drag or pull by physical force, often implying resistance**”⁶ The Kenneth Wuest translation adds: “...they were dragging him by the heels outside of the temple.”⁷

C. Verses 31-36 – Roman soldiers rescue Paul from the mob.

1. **Verse 31** – “Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.” – They were “...seeking to kill him...” – They didn’t seem to care about whether or not there was any evidence, they were simply going by what others had said and rumors. This kind of hatred and murderous mind set is of the devil. (cf. **John 8:37-47**).
2. “...commander of the garrison...” – A “garrison” was a “Roman military unit of about six hundred soldiers”⁸
3. **Verse 32** – This commander sent “...soldiers and centurions...” down to rescue Paul. The mob saw the soldiers coming and “...they stopped beating Paul.” – The word “**beating**” means; “**To strike, smite with the hand, stick, or other instrument repeatedly.**” Stanley Horton adds:

“That the Roman commander rescued Paul from the Jewish mob was an answer to prayer. Paul had written to the Romans, ‘Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea’ (Rom. 15:31).”⁹

4. **Verse 33** – The commander commanded that he be put into two chains. Dr. Robert Utley writes: “**to be bound with two chains**” This could mean (1) hands and feet or (2) between two Roman soldiers. Apparently the soldiers thought he was an insurrectionist (cf. v. 38).¹⁰

5. **Verses 34-36** – The soldiers ended up having to carry him due to “...the violence of the mob.”

D. Verses 37-40 – Paul requests to speak to the People. – The commander seems surprised that Paul can speak Greek and, apparently, he had come to the assumption that Paul was an Egyptian insurrection who had caused problems before in an attempt to overthrow the Roman occupation. According to Robert Utley, this rebellion occurred somewhere between A.D. 52–57¹¹ The year of our current narrative is around A.D. 57.

1. **Verse 38** – “...led the four thousand assassins...” – The meaning of this word “**assassins**” given by Bob Utley is: “**This is *sicarii*, a Latin term for assassins or dagger men. They are often called ‘zealots’ in the NT (cf. Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). They were a group of Jews committed to the violent overthrow of the Romans.**”¹²

2. Stanley Toussaint writes:

“Josephus wrote of an Egyptian impostor who claimed to be a prophet. He said this Egyptian had gathered 30,000 followers (Luke with accuracy states 4,000; Josephus had a tendency to inflate numbers) and in A.D. 54 came to the Mount of Olives promising his adherents that the walls of Jerusalem would collapse at his command. Instead, the Roman army promptly marched on them, killed some and captured others, while the remainder were scattered. The Egyptian escaped. Undoubtedly the people of Israel would have liked to lay their hands on this character who had caused so much trouble. When Lysias saw the riot in the temple, he assumed the center of the attention was this Egyptian and that the Jews were venting their wrath on him.”¹³

1. **Verses 39-40** – Paul explains to the commander who he is and, the commander believed him enough to allow him to speak. Regarding this, Stanley Horton adds:

“Paul answered by identifying himself as a Jew, a citizen of the prestigious city of Tarsus. This implies that he was ‘a noble person from a sophisticated place.’ Then he asked permission to ‘speak to

⁵Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

⁶Louw and Nida, 204.

⁷Kenneth S. Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), Ac 21:27–36.

⁸Louw and Nida, 549.

⁹Horton, 355

¹⁰Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 244.

¹¹Ibid, 245.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 417.

the people.' When this was given, he was allowed to stand on the stairs. Signaling his desire to speak, he got the attention of the crowd and there was sudden quiet. Then Paul began to speak."¹⁴

¹⁴Horton, 356-357.