

Acts 21:15-36

- **WILL OF GOD ...**
 - The Warning...
 - After Paul and company left the city of Miletus...
 - They SAILED south along the southern coast of Asia Minor [Turkey]
 - They were in a HURRY because Paul was trying to arrive in time for the feast of Pentecost...
 - When they arriving in TYRE Paul sought out [active] believers...
 - Who warned him through the Spirit NOT to go up to Jerusalem...
 - They accompanied him with their families back to his ship and prayed with him!
 - The Evangelist...
 - When Paul arrived at Caesarea he stayed with Philip the Evangelist - one of the SEVEN...
 - A man who was used by the Lord in MANY ways - because he was AVAILABLE...
 - He had FOUR virgin daughters who also PROPHESED...
 - We do NOT read about the children of Peter - John - or Paul [only Philip]
 - Because he was a powerful example of teaching his children to follow Jesus - **Ephesians 6:4**
 - The Prophet...
 - Paul spent many day in Caesarea - and the prophet Agabus came down to see him...
 - He tied himself up with the belt of Paul - and told him Paul would be bound in Jerusalem...
 - He gave Paul the message – but he did NOT add his own OPINION...
 - But when the companions of Paul - and those who were there with them heard this...
 - They pleaded with TEARS - that Paul should NOT go up to Jerusalem [their opinion]
 - Paul told them they were breaking his heart - he was willing to go to PRISON or DIE for Jesus...
 - When they saw they could NOT persuade him - they said the WILL of the LORD be done!
- **1ST - To JERUSALEM... vs. 15-16**
 - 1st - Hospitality... 15-16
 - After those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem.
 - Some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us And brought with them.
 - A certain Mnason of Cyprus - an early disciple with whom we were to lodge!
 - After spending MANY days - Paul and company packed up to leave for Jerusalem...
 - As they departed they brought with them DISCIPLES [μαθητής] from Caesarea...
 - Including MNASON [remember] - one of the EARLY disciples from Cyprus...
 - Likely meaning he was one of the FIRST to believe [perhaps on Pentecost]
 - Paul and company LODGED with him on their way to Jerusalem...
 - LODGED [ξενίζω] - from the word meaning STRANGER [ξένος]!
 - **I Peter 4:9** – “Be hospitable [φιλόξενος] to one another without grumbling.”
 - We should be HOSPITABLE – loving [φίλος] even to STRANGERS [ξένος]!

- Not out of OBLIGATION – no GRUMBLING [obligation] – but genuine...
- When we take the time to give food the hungry and drink to the thirsty...
- By doing so we show the LOVE of God to others – **John 13:35**
- Through which we now have the opportunity to tell them about Jesus – **Romans 2:4**
- More than that - we when we care for strangers we are actually ministering to Jesus!
- **Matthew 25:40** - “[Jesus] will answer and say to them – Assuredly I say to you - inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren you did it to Me.”
- 2nd - No guarantees...
 - The city of Jerusalem is located about 105km inland from Caesarea...
 - Paul got off at the port – then went the rest of the way on foot...
 - The trip would take MORE than one day – so the group planned on spending the night...
 - MNASON had a house along the road that led to Jerusalem...
 - So the group HOPED [subjunctive] to be able to stay there...
 - But it was NOT a guarantee – they left Caesarea without knowing for sure!
 - People tend to want guarantees before they step out in faith...
 - Before I share the Gospel – I want a guarantee people are going to get saved...
 - Before I give to those who are in need – I want a guarantee God will bless me back!
 - The ONLY guarantee we have - for sure nothing will happen if we do NOT step out...
 - If we do NOT preach the Gospel for sure no one will get saved...
 - If we do NOT help to those in need – for sure we will NOT be blessed...
 - Rather than looking for guarantees – we should step out in FAITH!
- 2ND – DIFFERENT TRADITIONS... vs. 17-25
 - 1st - Division... vs. 17-20
 - Little issue... vs. 17-18
 - When we had come to Jerusalem the brethren received us gladly.
 - On the following day Paul went in with us to James and all the elders were present!
 - When Paul first arrived in Jerusalem he was greeted GLADLY [ἀσμένως]
 - No doubt it did NOT hurt that Paul brought a financial gift - **Romans 15:26**
 - But the next day James [brother of Jesus] and ALL [πᾶς] the elders gathered...
 - The WARM greeting of the day before was GONE – there was a BIG problem...
 - The Jews who caused the trouble arguing Gentiles needed to be circumcised - **Acts 15:1**
 - Had been busy causing division in the church in Jerusalem!
 - Too often as Christian we make BIG problems out of LITTLE issues...
 - Rather than working together – we instead find reasons to ATTACK each another...
 - We focus on OUR beliefs - OUR group - OUR opinions - causing division...
 - And DIVISION causes the church to be ineffective for Jesus...

- Rather than seeing the LOVE of Jesus in us - the world sees us FIGHTING each other...
- Satan loves to cause DIVISION in the church - he wants to keep us distracted!
- Good News... vs. 19
 - When he had greeted them [Paul] told in detail those things which God had done.
 - Among the Gentiles through his ministry!
 - Paul sensing the TENSION in the room – and perhaps the LOOK of the elders...
 - Could have become DEFENSIVE – lashed out and gotten upset...
 - After all he had just brought the church a GIFT - they should have been grateful...
 - But instead of getting FRUSTRATED – Paul told them all about what God had DONE [ποιέω]
 - Going into great detail about His work among the NATIONS [ἔθνος]!
 - The key to having UNITY within the church [between churches] is Jesus...
 - Focus on what we have in COMMON - and overlook the LITTLE differences...
 - We must AGREE on the essential doctrines of the Bible [one salvation]
 - On non-essential issues we agree to disagree and NOT cause division!
- Glorifying God... vs. 20
 - When they heard it they glorified the Lord!
 - The report caused the elders to GLORIFY [imperfect] the Lord!
 - There is NOTHING wrong with having a particular church we are comfortable with...
 - The problem comes when we start to follow a NAME - rather than having UNITY in Jesus...
 - We need to overlook the differences - come together as the family of God...
 - Rather than identifying with a CHURCH [religion] - we simply follow Christ!
- 2nd – The Law... vs. 20-22
 - Jewish Believers...
 - [The Elders] said to [Paul]: You see brother how many myriads of Jews have believed.
 - And they are all zealous for the law. But they have been informed about you.
 - That you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses.
 - Saying that they ought not to circumcise their children or walk according to the customs.
 - What then? The assembly must certainly meet for they will hear that you have come!
 - God had also done a work in Jerusalem
 - There were MANY [10 thousand] Jews that had come [perfect] to the FAITH...
 - And ALL [πᾶς] of them were defined [ὑπάρχω] by a ZEAL for the LAW [τοῦ νόμου]
 - They were still DEDICATED to following the commands of the LAW of Moses...
 - And they heard Paul taught Jews NOT to be circumcised – NOT to follow their CUSTOMS...
 - These new believers were upset to hear Paul was rejecting [ἀποστασία] Moses...
 - And they were going to HEAR that Paul was now in Jerusalem!
 - The Law...
 - Paul DID argue that Gentiles do NOT need circumcision to be saved - **Acts 15:2**
 - But he did NOT reject Moses – he just taught we are NOT saved by the LAW...
 - Because there are TWO kinds of CIRCUMCISION – outward and inward...
 - TRUE circumcision [περιτομή] - is worshiping [present] God in the spirit - **Philippians 3:3**
 - NOT those who put their TRUST in the FLESH [their works]!
 - **Romans 2:29** - “A true Jew is one whose heart is right with god. And true circumcision is not a cutting of the body but a change of heart produced by God’s spirit.” [NLT]
 - Every Jew was circumcised PHYSICALLY in obedience to the Law.

- But they did NOT keep law – showing were NOT circumcised SPIRITUALLY...
- Circumcision of the HEART [cutting away sinful nature] is how we are able to obey the Lord...
- Those circumcised in their heart – walk by the Spirit who empowers them to keep the LAW!
- **Colossians 2:11** – “When you came to Christ you were circumcised not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure cutting away your sinful nature.” [NLT]
- Before we came to Jesus we did what our SIN wanted us to – we were slaves to SIN...
- We did NOT think about Jesus – how to live for Jesus – how to live a righteous life...
- But when we accepted Jesus Christ – we DIED to that old sinful nature...
- The sinful desires of our heart were cut off – so we were free to live for the Lord...
- That change of heart [circumcision] is how we can be obedient to the Lord!
- **Romans 6:6** – “We are no longer slaves to sin.” [NLT]
- 3rd – The Compromise... vs. 23-25
 - The Vow... vs. 23-24
 - Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow.
 - Take and be purified with them and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads.
 - That all may know those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing.
 - But that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law!
 - Therefore [οὖν] - in an attempt to stop a potential SPLIT in the church...
 - This is what the ELDERS commanded [imperative] Paul to do...
 - FOUR had taken a VOW – and needed to be PURIFIED [passive] at the Temple...
 - NAZARITE vow which required a person to shave their head when done - **Numbers 6:18**
 - The Elders told [imperative] Paul to go with them men – cover ALL the expenses...
 - It would be an open display so everyone [παῖς] might know [subjunctive]
 - What they had heard about Paul was NOT true - rather [ἀλλά] he kept the LAW [τὸν νόμον]!
 - Paul was willing to go along with the suggestion because...
 - Their motivation was NOT to have Paul live under the LAW...
 - But they were trying [subjunctive] NOT to upset the new Jewish believers!
 - **Romans 14:19** - “Let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.” [NLT]
 - As long as the rules people follow do NOT contradict the Word of God...
 - We are called to RESPECT the convictions of others - do NOT offend them...
 - So we can show them LOVE - and a relationship with Jesus that changes the heart!
 - The Gentiles... vs. 25
 - Concerning the Gentiles who believe we have written and decided.
 - They should observe no such thing except that they should keep themselves:
 - From things offered to idols - from blood - things strangled - and from sexual immorality!
 - This was NOT change of doctrine for the GENTILE [ἔθνος] believers...
 - The Elders still held to the FOUR judgements [κρίνω] of the counsel of Jerusalem - **Acts 15:20**
 - Therefore - Paul agreed to go along with their suggestion - because the church is DIVERSE...
 - He understood the church in Jerusalem could be DIFFERENT from the Gentiles churches...
 - So while he was in Jerusalem - he would follow their customs [be a Jew]
 - But if he was in a Gentile church – he would follow their customs [be a gentile]!
 - **I Corinthians 9:22** - “All things to all men that I might by all means save some.”
 - God has allowed there to be many DENOMINATIONS within His Church...
 - Each with a slightly different FLAVOR - different FOCUS - but all with the same LORD...
 - The reason is so that the church can minister to all DIFFERENT kinds of people!

- **3RD - A SHUT DOOR... vs. 26-36**
 - 1st - The Temple... vs. 26-29
 - Men from Asia... vs. 26-28
 - Then Paul took the [four] 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.
 - 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 crying out: Men of Israel help!
 - This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people - the law and this place!
 - The NEXT day the men went with Paul and took their vow in the Temple...
 - They set the number of days [seven] they would be PURE [ἁγνισμός]
 - And Paul PAID for the necessary offerings for each one of them...
 - At the end of SEVEN days Paul returned to the Temple...
 - There were some men there from ASIA - who recognized Paul from Ephesus...
 - Perhaps the same Jews [Alexander] who turned on Paul during the riot – **Acts 19:33**
 - For them seeing Paul was like a second chance – finish what they started...
 - So they STIRRED up [imperfect] the people - and grabbed Paul...
 - Demanding [imperative] the people HELP them - because this was THE man [ὁ ἄνθρωπος]
 - Who TAUGHT everyone - everywhere against the Jews - the Law - and the Temple!
 - **II Timothy 4:14** – “Alexander the coppersmith has done me much harm.”
 - Gentiles... vs. 28-29
 - Furthermore [Paul] also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.
 - For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city.
 - Whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple!
 - Moreover [ἔτι] they had seen [imperfect] Paul walking in the city with Trophimus...
 - One of the Gentiles who came with Paul from Ephesus to bring the gift to the church...
 - And assumed [imperfect] he had POLLUTED [κοινόω] the Temple by taking him inside!
 - There were signs over every entrance to the Temple – JEWS only...
 - If you tried to enter and were NOT a Jew – the sign threatened DEATH!
 - Funny how our RULES only tend to keep people away from God...
 - People are often NOT comfortable coming into the CHURCH...
 - And all our RULES and traditions are intimidating – like a sign saying keep OUT...
 - They fear if they come they will look foolish - so they stay away!
- Chaos... vs. 30-31
 - 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
 - A crowd ran over and dragging [imperfect] Paul out of the Temple...
 - They immediately SHUT [passive] the doors of the Temple behind him...
 - The door for sharing Jesus with the Jews – was CLOSED to Paul...
 - It was time for Paul to become what God called him to be – the Apostle to the Gentiles!
 - **I Timothy 2:7** - “I have been chosen... as a preacher and apostle to teach the Gentiles.”
 - There will be times when the Lord allows a door to be CLOSED in our lives...
 - Do NOT look for a window to climb in – instead look for where the Lord is leading!

- 2nd - Just like Jesus... vs. 31-36
 - Roman Guard... vs. 31-32
 - Now as they were seeking to kill him.
 - News came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.
 - He immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them.
 - And when they saw the commander and the soldiers they stopped beating Paul!
 - It was the festival of PENTECOST – Jerusalem was FILLED with people...
 - Rome was always on high alert when the Jews came for their FEASTS...
 - The COMMANDER - leader [ἄρχω] of a thousand men [χίλιοι] - heard there was a UPROAR...
 - He rushed down with Centurions [plural] – meaning there were HUNDREDS of soldiers...
 - When the people saw the soldiers – they stopped BEATING [τύπτω] Paul!
 - The accusation... vs. 33-34
 - 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.
 - 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!
 - Paul was BOUND [δέω] with two chains – as the Spirit had said - **Acts 20:22**
 - The COMMANDER demanded [imperfect] to know WHO he was - and WHAT he had done...
 - But the people could NOT agree – they kept shouted DIFFERENT things...
 - So he took Paul to the Fortress Antonia - at the North end of the Temple Mount...
 - Paul had to be carried because of the BEATING had been so SEVERE!
 - Away with him... vs. 35-36
 - When he reached the stairs he had to be carried because of the violence of the mob.
 - For the multitude of the people followed after crying out: Away with him!
 - This fulfilled the prophecy of Agabus - bound and turned over to the Gentiles - **Acts 21:11**
 - A scene that strikes a remarkable resemblance to – the crucifixion of Jesus...
 - Because when we choose to follow Christ – we can expect to be treated like Him!
 - We will find it far easier to blend into the world - than to stand for Jesus...
 - Because if we do the things the world does – they will accept us...
 - The world embraces us – because are joining in with them – justifying them...
 - But we do NOT want to follow the world – because we know where they are going...
 - We want to follow Jesus – take the narrow path that leads to eternal life!