

**PRAYER FOCUS:** *Pray Ephesians 6:18-20 for one another, that we might have boldness to speak the gospel in every circumstance.*

**HIDE IT IN OUR HEARTS:** Linger in the Text and Let it Dwell Richly

*“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”*

*—Ephesians 6:18-20*



Sunday, May 01, 2022



## **An Ambassador in Chains**

*Following in the Steps of the One Who Called Us*

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**HEAR IT:** Listen to the Text and Discover the Truth

**Introduction:**

Paul’s final visit to the city of Jerusalem and the temple was truly a memorable one. Like his Savior before Him, he would face an angry mob, arrest and trial. But unlike Jesus, Paul would be spared in Jerusalem. For the call of God upon his life as a witness was not yet complete. And though Jerusalem is not the finish line for Paul, it is the starting point of his imprisonment which will shape the remainder of Luke’s narrative in the Book of Acts.

**READ OR REVIEW THE PASSAGE: ACTS 21:15-36.**

*Use this morning’s notes to assist in answering the discussion questions.*

**HASH IT OUT:** Look into the Text and Develop the Truth

**THE STORYLINES:**

We were reminded this morning of the **three major storylines** in this narrative: one from the perspective of the **church**, another from the perspective of the nation of **Israel**, and the final one from the perspective of the apostle **Paul** himself. We will use these three perspectives to shape our discussion this evening.

1. The first storyline is that of **the church**, this new community of Jews and Gentiles brought together in one body by the Gospel, and the challenge of living it out.
  - a. Though Luke does not give attention to it here (for it is not central to his focus), **what is Paul and his team bringing with them** to present to the Jerusalem church and why?
  - b. Who is the **James** in this section with whom Paul has his extended discussion and what is his role in the Jerusalem church?
  - c. The challenge of accepting Gentiles into the church was a challenge for the church from the beginning. Describe this challenge and how we have seen it play out to this point, and how it is still evident here.
  - d. Paul yields to what we might consider a rather unusual request. What was the request and why did Paul, **in humility**, submit to this request?
  - e. The issue between them concerned **culture, ceremony** and **tradition**. The solution to which they came was not a **compromise**, in the sense of sacrificing a doctrinal or moral principle, but a **concession** in the area of practice. How does 1 Corinthians 9:19–23 (see below) shape Paul's thinking? How should this impact ours?

*"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; <sup>21</sup> to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. <sup>23</sup> I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it."*

2. The second storyline is that of **the nation of Israel**, who once again is confronted by someone who is proclaiming the Gospel to them; and once again they reject both the man and his message.
  - a. What were the false accusations brought against Paul in the temple?
  - b. **Where** did the Jews take Paul? Why did they take him there and **what** did they intend to do him?
  - c. What phrase and action symbolically captures the nation's rejection of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
3. The third and final storyline is that of **the apostle Paul**, God's chosen instrument, following in the steps of his Savior on this his final visit to Jerusalem. The parallels are quite evident.
  - a. Identified as many parallels in this as you can between **Jesus' final journey** to Jerusalem and **Paul's final journey**.
  - b. Luke draws this comparison intentionally. What purpose does it serve in helping us to understand Paul's mission and its alignment with Jesus' mission?
  - c. Paul understood that suffering was part of His calling (**Acts 9:15, 16** "...he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; <sup>16</sup> for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.")  
But Peter informs us that this calling is for all disciples: "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps." — **1 Peter 2:21**  
How should this shape our view of suffering? Do you view suffering more like Paul (**to be accepted**) or like his companions (**to be avoided**)?