

## *Sent by Love: A Study of Acts, Part 2*

### Acts 21:15-36 - "Trouble in Jerusalem"

November 21, 2021 – Beth Case

#### **Welcome & Prayer**

**Review:** Acts 21:1-14

**Read:** Acts 21:15-36

#### **How was Paul received upon arrival in Jerusalem?**

**Acts 21:15-20** - After this we packed our things and left for Jerusalem. <sup>16</sup>Some believers from Caesarea accompanied us, and they took us to the home of Mnason, a man originally from Cyprus and one of the early believers. <sup>17</sup>When we arrived, the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem welcomed us warmly. <sup>18</sup>The next day Paul went with us to meet with James, and all the elders of the Jerusalem church were present. <sup>19</sup>After greeting them, Paul gave a detailed account of the things God had accomplished among the Gentiles through his ministry. <sup>20</sup>After hearing this, they praised God. And then they said, "You know, dear brother, how many thousands of Jews have also believed, and they all follow the law of Moses very seriously.

- *Think back to Acts 15 and the carefully negotiated agreement found there. How has the situation changed in Jerusalem? Why do you think this is happening? How are the elders responding?*

#### **How does Paul navigate this difficult social situation?**

**Acts 21:20b-26** - But the Jewish believers here in Jerusalem have been told that you are teaching all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn their backs on the laws of Moses. They've heard that you teach them not to circumcise their children or follow other Jewish customs. <sup>22</sup>What should we do? They will certainly hear that you have come. <sup>23</sup>"Here's what we want you to do. We have four men here who have completed their vow. <sup>24</sup>Go with them to the Temple and join them in the purification ceremony, paying for them to have their heads ritually shaved. Then everyone will know that the rumors are all false and that you yourself observe the Jewish laws. <sup>25</sup>"As for the Gentile believers, they should do what we already told them in a letter: They should abstain from eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality." <sup>26</sup>So Paul went to the Temple the next day with the other men. They had already started the purification ritual, so he publicly announced the date when their vows would end and sacrifices would be offered for each of them.

- *As the church grows, priorities are stretched and questioned. What is negotiable? What is non-negotiable?*
- *The Jerusalem elders appear to be between a rock and a hard place. What do you think of their suggested solution to Paul? What are its assets and liabilities? What should they have done instead?*

#### **At the close of today's passage (v36), what is the climate of Jerusalem (spiritual, emotional, political climate)?**

**Acts 21:27-36** - <sup>27</sup>The seven days were almost ended when some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the Temple and roused a mob against him. They grabbed him, <sup>28</sup>yelling, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who preaches against our people everywhere and tells everybody to

disobey the Jewish laws. He speaks against the Temple—and even defiles this holy place by bringing in Gentiles.”<sup>29</sup> (For earlier that day they had seen him in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus, and they assumed Paul had taken him into the Temple.)<sup>30</sup> The whole city was rocked by these accusations, and a great riot followed. Paul was grabbed and dragged out of the Temple, and immediately the gates were closed behind him.<sup>31</sup> As they were trying to kill him, word reached the commander of the Roman regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.<sup>32</sup> He immediately called out his soldiers and officers and ran down among the crowd. When the mob saw the commander and the troops coming, they stopped beating Paul.<sup>33</sup> Then the commander arrested him and ordered him bound with two chains. He asked the crowd who he was and what he had done.<sup>34</sup> Some shouted one thing and some another. Since he couldn’t find out the truth in all the uproar and confusion, he ordered that Paul be taken to the fortress.<sup>35</sup> As Paul reached the stairs, the mob grew so violent the soldiers had to lift him to their shoulders to protect him.<sup>36</sup> And the crowd followed behind, shouting, “Kill him, kill him!”

- *Keeping this in mind, what might it mean that even centuries later, so many have heard the Gospel?*
- *What challenges are you facing now? What might this passage have to say about how followers of Christ face challenges, even opposition?*

#### **Extra Credit:**

- *How might the following Scriptures connect to Acts 21:15-36?*
  - **Romans 5:3-5:** We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,<sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,<sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.
  - **1 Peter 1:3-7:** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,<sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,<sup>5</sup> who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.<sup>6</sup> In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials,<sup>7</sup> so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.