

STAY THE COURSE

ACTS 21:17-40

17 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

Back Drop-Paul desired to go to Jerusalem being led by the SPIRIT, prophesied to from Agabus not to go or he would end up in chains. The rest of body believer's tried to talk him out of going. Paul had been attacked on every front—

The World

The Flesh

The Devil

The Church—which was the hardest and broke Paul's heart. PAUL STAYED THE COURSE.

18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

SET THE STAGE--James “the just” / Camel Knees. JESUS's half-brother and the elders who were probably 70 in total. This is a big group that makes up the spiritual leadership at Jerusalem.

19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

Paul did not boast about what he did but what GOD did through the ministry.

Don't boast about CCO but the work GOD is doing in the ministry. Be aware of people who say look what I did, that is a proud statement. In all things give the glory to GOD. Many ministries come to share about how much good stuff they are doing and not recognizing that GOD is doing the work and deserves the GLORY.GOD gives grace to the humble but opposes the proud.

In the Greek this gives the sense that he told them every single little detail.

Like an excited child telling his friends all about a new experience. I love the way my son recounts a story of something---he gets so excited and does not want to leave out any details.

I picture Paul sharing with an excitement like that ... “just much more articulate.” We planted 20 churches as a team, with many more born out of those by his apprentice leaders. In Asia alone the NT mentions Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Colossae, and Hierapolis. Ephesus was really a city full of churches meeting in homes and from that work all the others were started.

The riots in Ephesus, the guy who fell out of the 3rd story window, the power of the gospel in Athens and Corinth.

APPLICATION-Tell others what GOD has done and is doing in our lives.

Telling others is a potent weapon in our arsenal.

Rahab the harlot helped the spies because someone shared with her what GOD had done for HIS people. Joshua Chapter 2

2 spies sent from Joshua went to check out the land and if they were caught they would surely die. But Rahab hid them and here is what she said

8 she came up to them on the roof,

9 and said to the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you.

10 "For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

11 “And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

The actions of someone sharing about what GOD had done for the children of Israel had a profound impact on the future.....Rahab was saved (the lineage of David and JESUS can be traced through her).

The land was taken by Israel.

CONTINUING IN THE APPLICATION

Your testimony is irrefutable- what GOD has done in our lives is important to share with others. GOD has freed me from drugs He led me out of the darkness and transferred me into HIS kingdom. What GOD has done for me he can for you!

Mike challenged us 2 weeks ago to take risks.

I challenge those of you who use social media to share your testimony on it. Utilize this when sharing your faith.

Everyone has a testimony—for those of you who have been walking with the LORD since you were 8 or 9 years old you have a sweet testimony of how GOD spared you from a lot pain of that goes on this world.

The testimony of how HE has never left you, how he has comforted you in the midst of a loss, how he delivered you from the bondage of sin,

Mark Buckley testimony of how GOD delivered him from depression-he shares that and GOD is using it to encourage others.

We see in verse 20 how a testimony can help encourage believers

20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law;

BUT we also heard some other stuff.....

21 "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 nor to walk according to the customs.

22 "What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.

- a. **The elders of Jerusalem were happy for what God was doing among the Gentiles. Yet in Jerusalem the Christian community was almost entirely from a Jewish background, and these Christians still valued many of the Jewish laws and customs. They were still zealous for the law.**

People who are zealous for the law are very difficult to work with and talk to.

b. They have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews **NOT GENTILES who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses: The Christian community of Jerusalem heard bad, false rumors about Paul.**

Proverbs 6:16 these six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:

17 A proud look, **a lying tongue**, Hands that shed innocent blood,

18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil,
 19 A false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren. They heard that he had become essentially anti-Jewish, and told Jewish Christians that it was wrong for them to continue in Jewish laws and customs.

Paul could have responded to this in so many different ways.
 I never said that!
 Lies!
 Bring the witnesses before me.

The danger of not knowing the facts and talking as if you do.

The story of the women from the Eastern Land.

The words we use cannot be taken back. Matt 15:11 "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."

Proverbs 10: 19 ¶ in the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.

Application- Check the facts of the information you pass on ... Watch your mouth. Don't spread gossip ... it creates heartache and can't ever be taken back!

Back to Paul

Based on Romans 14:4-6, (to some one day is more important than another to others every day is just as important) it seems that Paul didn't have a problem with Jewish Christians who wanted to continue to observe old customs and laws. It seems that he himself did so sometimes, such as when he took and fulfilled a vow of consecration in Acts 18:18-21 (a Nazirite vow). Paul seemed fine with this, as long as they didn't think it made them more right before God.

c. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come: This has the sense of, Paul, this is controversial and people will hear about it. Let's do something about this.

Church Politics.

Did not keep Paul from staying the course.

23 "Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow.

24 "Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.

25 "But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."

26 Then Paul took the 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.

Paul submitted to them even though this would cost him time and money. The elders were politicking and wanted Paul to look more Jewish. How did Paul avoid these church politics? By submitting.

What keeps us from submitting? Pride.

Is there something you disagree with here at CCO? Is it a biblical matter or philosophy?

Is it a preference?

If it is not a biblical matter the answer is submission.

I am a man of authority as well under authority. The elders stand point ... they were probably relieved Paul did not make an issue out of this, from Paul's point of view it may have been a hassle.

Application –Since GOD has called you to be part of CCO submit to the leadership and stay the course.

a. We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses: They advised Paul to both join and sponsor these four Christians from a Jewish background.

b. Four men who have taken a vow: The particular vow of consecration was probably similar to Paul's Nazirite vow mentioned in Acts 18:18-21.

By Paul agreeing to do this, he demonstrates that he never taught Christian Jews to forsake Moses and not to circumcise their children and that they were required to ignore Jewish customs, as he had been falsely accused by some among the Jerusalem Christians.

a. Then Paul took the men: Paul could agree to this and sponsor the four men taking the vow of consecration because there was never a hint that such things would be required of Gentiles as a test of righteousness.

i. He had shown them that their ceremonies were not destructive; that they were only dangerous when they depended on them for salvation.

ii. Many commentators believe this was a terrible compromise on Paul's part; that he was a hypocrite. Yet the motive behind Paul's sponsorship of these Christian Jews completing their Nazirite vow is explained in

1 Corinthians 9:20: And to the Jews I became as a Jew that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law.

Do I understand the difference between compromising vs submitting?

It is a matter of being biblical or a philosophy/practice.

You see Galatians 2 verse 11 ¶ now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;

12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

Now this is a biblical matter- Peter was dividing the church= Jewish believers and the Gentile believers and Peter knew he was wrong. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. We don't have 2 sets of rules one for the Jewish believers and another for the Gentiles.

Paul understood Peter had comprised the unity of the church by doing this and let him know face to face.

This is important as we disciple and evangelize. If someone wants to follow the law and abstain from certain foods, keep one day above the next, its ok, just don't tell me I have to do that. I love Bacon! However if I am eating bacon that makes my brother stumble, I will abstain as well.

b. At which time an offering should be made: It's important to understand that this offering – an animal sacrifice – was not in any way for the purpose of atonement or forgiveness. Paul absolutely understood that only the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross atones for sin. Yet not every sacrifice in the Jewish system was for atonement; many were for thanksgiving or dedication, as this one was.

27 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,

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."

29 (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30 And 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. Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd: They claimed that Paul was against the people [Israel], the law, and this place [the temple], but these accusations were unfounded. Paul simply rejected trust in any of these as a basis for righteousness before God, which comes only through Jesus Christ.

i. The charges against Paul in Acts 21:28 were an echo of the charges Stephen was executed for (Acts 6:13). Paul helped preside over that execution; now he is accused in a similar way.

God uses other believers to encourage us. God has given us many examples of men and women who have stayed the course. I would encourage all you if you don't already have one pick up this book.

Marty's Book- Read story of Thomas Hauker.

Church my primary job is to equip you. I believe the day is coming in my generation that America will be under severe persecution. We all need to be ready to die for what we believe and

that starts with Living for HIM now. If we don't live for HIM we won't stay the course later. We have JESUS as our supreme example, also the apostles and many more that have followed that lead.

Is 50:7 "For the Lord GOD will help Me; Therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed.

b. All the city was disturbed; and the people ran together: The crowd was enlarged because it was feast-time (Acts 20:16). It was enraged because they believed Paul not only preached against the people, the law, and the temple, but also profaned the temple by bringing Gentiles into its inner courts (they said, he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place).

c. Trophimus the Ephesian whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple: It was absolutely prohibited for Gentiles to go beyond the designated Court of the Gentiles in the temple grounds. Signs were posted which read (in both Greek and Latin): No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught trespassing will bear personal responsibility for his ensuing death. The Romans were so sensitive to this that they authorized the Jews to execute anyone that offended in this way, even if the offender was a Roman citizen.

31 Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

a. Now as they were seeking to kill him: Paul had been seized by an enraged mob, and the mob didn't just want to take him out of the temple courts. They wanted to kill him, right there in the outer courtyard area of the temple mount. Paul had been near death because of the attacks of murderous mobs before (Acts 14:5, 19), and he must have thought, Here we go again

32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

ABOUT 500 men

33 Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done.

Two chains means Paul was handcuffed to a soldier on either side. Paul must have immediately remembered the prophecy of Agabus (Acts 21:11).

c. When they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul: The Romans didn't sympathize with Paul, but they were interested in keeping public order, so they arrested Paul both for his own protection and to remove the cause of the uproar.

34 And 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.

35 When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"

d. The multitude of the people followed after, crying out, Away with him! When the mob cried out for his death, Paul must have remembered when he was part of such a mob, agreeing with the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7:54-8:1).

i. Or, perhaps, it even reminded him of the trial of Jesus: The shout Away with him! which pursued him as he was carried up the steps was the shout with which Jesus death had been demanded not far from that spot some twenty-seven years before (Luke 23:18; John 19:15). (Bruce)

ii. Away with him! They did not mean, Take him away from the temple area. They meant, Remove him from the earth. They wanted him dead.

37 Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek?"

38 "Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?"

39 But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."

As Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander: At first, the Roman commander thought that Paul was a terrorist, and was surprised that Paul was an educated man and could speak Greek.

The language was a surprise, because both the language and phrasing showed that Paul was a man educated in the Greek world, not a rabble-rouser. The phrase itself was a surprise; it seems far too polite and reserved. We would expect Paul to be screaming, Help, help! and not, Pardon me sir, may I have a moment with you?

The Egyptian mentioned (also mentioned by the Jewish historian Josephus) led a ragged army of four thousand men to the Mount of Olives where they declared they would take over the temple mount. Roman soldiers had quickly scattered them, but the leader got away.

I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: When Paul identified himself to the Roman commander, it put him in an entirely different standing. He was a citizen of Tarsus, not a suspected terrorist.

Paul instantly corrects this man- he was going to be killed for mistaken identity.

Church sometimes people will hate because of who they think we are. We must correct them. When I was witnessing to some muslims. Actually was eating the Ramadan meal with them and they found out I was a pastor they brought the crusades and I killed all these people and took over the land. I did not do any of that. I am a man from America

I obviously was mistaken for really good-looking stars like Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt, and so on!

c. I implore you, permit me to speak to the people. At this moment, when his life was in danger from an angry mob and he was suspected of being a dangerous criminal, Paul had one thing on his mind: Let me preach the gospel!

I am going to stay the course ! with my last words I will give my testimony and the gospel.

i. It's amazing that Paul could think and speak so clearly, considering that he had just been beaten.

23 So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying,

So when he had given him permission: Why did the commander permit Paul to speak to the crowd? Because he had recognized that he had done wrong to Paul, a Roman citizen, when he bound him with chains (Acts 21:33), and because he hoped that Paul's speech might quiet down the mob.

This was an opportunity Paul had waited a lifetime for. He had an incredible passion for the salvation of his fellow Jews (Romans 9:1-5), and had probably thought of himself as uniquely qualified to effectively communicate the gospel to them - if he only had the right opportunity.

Do we have the same Love and Passion for our neighbors / Oikos to come to salvation?

Or are we crippled with fear? When I witnessed to those muslims I thought this could be the end.

In my previous life (BC) the fear of man led me to do evil, now the fear of GOD motivates me to do good.

In a way unique to most of us, Paul really did know the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (Philippians 3:10).

Paul's particular call and ministry make these similarities especially striking, but we are called to follow after Jesus also. We shouldn't be surprised when events in our lives are like events in Jesus life. There may be a time of temptation in the wilderness, a time when people come to us with needs only God can meet, a time when we seem at the mercy of a storm, a time when we must cry out to God as in the Garden of Gethsemane, a time when we must simply lay down our lives, and trust God will gloriously raise us up. We, like Paul, are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

WE MUST STAY THE COURSE.

TO BE CONTINUED!!!!!!!!!!