



**His Will His Way Always
Resilience in Prayer
Resilience in Faith
Acts 21:1-26**

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Here is the situation, revival is breaking out among the gentile nations post resurrection. Years of Jewish actions and inaction to obtain proselytes from those same nations have not exactly produced large numbers, but in just a few years and from only three trips, there are now established churches all throughout the eastern portion of the Mediterranean, and thanks to what happened on Pentecost, to include in Rome as well as Alexandria.



Yes, there are many Jews who are also saved, but many have their own view of what is and is not “theologically” correct. There is a situation brewing in Jerusalem that sees repeats at various times in history.

Organized religion, one that has most, but not all, of their theology correct, has joined with those who are recent followers of Jesus, but are not truly disciples yet, and a power struggle is taking place. Organized religion loves to get their hands on brand new believers to teach them “their” way. I have run into this more than once and it is a clear indicator to me of the need to disciple new believers in the Word, not in religion. The net result is a bunch of upset highly motivated folks who are not exactly operating in the spirit, in fact, far from it. But they truly believe they are correct in their interpretation of whatever it is they are leaning on for authority. It just may not be the Bible.

This will repeat over and over again throughout history. In fact, we have seen it show up again just recently as revival breaks out on various college campuses, but it does not take place the “way” and “manner” that certain groups want it to. So, they publicly question the validity and go about, once again, grieving the Spirit and basically ending it.

I see this weekly in the comments I see online to our teachings. The tropes are always the same and usually begin with an assertion of a superior view of “religion” but not necessarily God’s word. I do indeed delete them, and in many cases, block the individual who is asserting superior knowledge.

I have personally been involved in and seen a beginning move of the Holy Spirit with a reinvigoration of the lives of believers who were experiencing His power in their life for the first time, worship was marvelous and there was a desire for more. But there were those on staff who were jealous of what was taking place. You see, they wanted to be at the center of it all and they weren’t. So, there was then imposed by certain staff an intentional slowing down of what the Spirit had started. Suddenly meetings were canceled or rescheduled weeks down the road and this effectively grieved the Holy Spirit and ended the early flashes of revival.

Revival, as it starts, can be, at times, fragile and Satan will do whatever he can and use whoever he can get to listen to him, usually carnal Christians, to stop it. There are those times he is not successful, but when those who are at the center of grieving the Holy Spirit and listening instead to Satan are part of the church, that is a victory in the eyes of the enemy. Who better to stop a move of the Spirit than those who are in the Church and believe their ox is being gored by what the Lord is doing. God needs to do things their way and use them and not do it any other way than that. Thus, the hatred by the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Church of the Anabaptists.

They were called the rebaptisers by both groups because they believed what the Bible said that baptism is an outward sign of a new inward reality and is based on the salvation of the one who is being baptized. It does not save them, it does not protect them, it does not lock them into you specific religious niche, it was meant to be a sign of a changed life due to salvation. “Anabaptists were not surprised by persecution. They knew they would be seen as revolutionaries, despite their commitment to non-violence; as heretics, despite their commitment to the Bible; and as disturbers of the status quo.” (Murphy 2000, 16)

Sounds a lot like what we will see Paul accused of. We are going to see that the push back that Paul has been seeing in Macedonia, Achaia and Asia, has a center of operations now in Jewish “followers” of Jesus in Jerusalem. Organized religion disguised as Judaizers.

For us today, as we continue to minister here at Calvary Chapel, we are going to be challenged to look on and many of us will decide as we do, we want what the Lord wants no matter what, just like Paul. Resilience in our faith and obedience to Christ is paramount. How resilient are we?



As followers of Jesus Christ living in the Spirit, we are led every second of every day to do what He would have us to do. We tend to keep our eyes on the good things and the promises of victory that is ours, and that victory is indeed true. Prior to this trip, Paul, a serious follower of Jesus, had gone through various forms of persecution but the Lord was there with him in all of it. He has a resilient faith, one that stands no matter what. His eyes were on the Lord. So much so he wrote the following to the church in Rome.

Romans 8:28–39

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory. What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? **If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t he also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God’s right hand, pleading for us. Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?** (As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.”) **No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (NLT)

For Paul, this is all about to get incredibly real. He is about to live the reality, again, of what he has written to the Romans. He has plans to go to Rome and Spain, and he will indeed get there, but not exactly the way he had planned to do so.

God has provided Paul a heads up, to what is coming up. And we will hear the message loud and clear that captivity is ahead, persecution is ahead, Paul knows it, and chooses to go with God’s planned detour to his own plans.

Here in Acts 21, the voyage to Jerusalem picks back up and things get very real very fast for Paul and the team traveling with him.

Acts 21:1–3

“Now when we had parted from them and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos, and on the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara; and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for the ship was to unload its cargo there. (NASB 2020)

This is a hard and fast trip after leaving Miletus as within less than a week, they are all in Tyre for a short layover.

We have heard the Spirit speak multiple times in the book of Acts. Now we will hear the Spirit scream. “The prophetic voice flows through bodies like water flows down river banks, and in every case those yielded to prophetic unction say the same to Paul—incarceration and torture await you in Jerusalem. And with this holy word, the saints draw a conclusion for Paul: don’t go! From start to finish in this passage, it is clear that the journey is outside their control.” (Jennings 2017, 196)



Acts 21:4–6

“After looking up the disciples, we stayed there for seven days; and they kept telling Paul, through the Spirit, not to set foot in Jerusalem. When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. Then we boarded the ship, and they returned home.” (NASB 2020)

There was a church in Tyre. Most likely founded as a result of the first outflow of believers from Jerusalem when Stephen was martyred. So, Paul and the team seek them out.

Remember, Paul is empowered and filled with the Holy Spirit and he is following the directions of the Spirit at all times. We need to keep that tucked into our minds as we start seeing various prophets telling him what he will encounter in Jerusalem. In the church, there are those who are gifted with the gift of prophecy. What we are going to learn here is that they will interpret what the Lord shows them one way, Paul knows what they are saying, but he does not interpret it the same way. This is the New Testament version of prophecy, a forthtelling of what it is the Holy Spirit is revealing.

And there are indeed potential issues with interpretation as the Lord reveals things to us.

Let's back up just a little since we are reading about the application of a spiritual gift that Paul wrote about and taught about. A gift that was active in the church from Pentecost to today. The gift of prophecy. And one more thing, it is a gift given by the Holy Spirit, do not believe anything anybody tells you that you can activate this gift by taking the right class or reading the right books or saying and doing the right things That is witchcraft, that is occultism.

1 Corinthians 12:8–11

“For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. **But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.**” (NASB 2020)

Prophecy is a spiritual gift given by the Holy Spirit. The gift of prophecy is speaking forth the word of God through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is being a channel through which the Lord may speak...Despite common belief, prophecy is not only foretelling the future. Most of prophecy is forthtelling, or speaking forth the word of God. In fact, the gift of prophecy as it was practiced in the early church was more often used for edification, for exhortation, and for comfort than it was for predicting future events (see 1 Corinthians 14:3). (Smith 2018, 161)

Knowing that prophecy can take two different forms we find “both forms are found in this passage. First of all, prophecy can function as evangelism. Oftentimes, the act of teaching or sharing the gospel is referred to as prophesying. This form of prophecy is probably the one that Philip’s daughters practiced. Philip is referred to as “the evangelist” (v 8) and his daughters most likely had the same ministry.

The second form of prophecy was literal prediction of near future events. This is seen most clearly in the character of Agabus.” (Mohler Jr. 2019, 122)

Through the gift of prophecy, God speaks to the church and builds us up, encourages us and exhorts us to indeed have a resilient faith. The exercise of this gift is part of this. As I teach, there are those times where the Spirit is the one speaking, yeah, I am probably not following my notes at that point. There is something He wants us to hear that will build us up, increase our faith and grow us in Christ.



Part of that includes the “just do it” actions of exhortation. We hear His word and then are encouraged to go out and do His word. That is part of the gift or prophecy.

And prophecy can also comfort us. God is still on the throne. We all need that word.

One more thing, the exercise of the gift of prophecy is under the control of the one who has received the gift (1 Corinthians 14:32). That is the case with the exercise of all spiritual gifts. I do not believe that the Holy Spirit will interrupt Himself and I also do not believe He takes over the control of your body (Galatians 5:23). Sorry, there is no such thing as being slain in the spirit in the Bible.

There is also the potential that the Lord will provide one with this gift, a view of the future. Our problem is understanding what it is He has shown us, or in other words, interpreting it.

There is a danger though that we might misinterpret what the Lord has shown us. I tend to stay quiet at times because of that one issue. I know what the Lord showed me, but is my interpretation of what He showed me, the correct interpretation? I am reminded of all the prophetic utterances that Donald Trump would indeed be reelected to a second term, well that did indeed come to pass, just four years later than what many were saying.

Michael Brown says the following about new testament prophecy.

“Do we just think prophecies are inspired guesswork? That they’re totally hit or miss? That we have as good a chance of speaking accurately as inaccurately? That we really can’t take prophetic words too seriously? If so, then why couch them in divine language? Better to say, “I have a feeling that this is going to happen. Let’s pray and see.” But if we say, “The Lord says,” or, “The Lord showed me,” we had better be sure about our words. Without question the New Testament calls for prophetic words to be tested, which indicates that in this era, when everyone can potentially prophesy, we cannot take everything at face value. Prophecies must be judged. (See 1 Corinthians 14:29 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19–21.) ...words are to be spoken responsibly, after which others—ideally, other prophets, when possible—must weigh carefully what is said. And Paul reminds us not to despise prophecies. It appears that in his day too there were abuses because of the profusion of the gift. Plus, sometimes prophetic words don’t make a lot of sense at first, so it would be easy to dismiss them or even despise them. Paul says we dare not do that, giving us these words of wisdom: “Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Examine all things. Firmly hold onto what is good” (1 Thess. 5:19–21).” (Brown 2018, 83-84)

Paul has seen the same thing these prophets have seen, and he knows the hearts of those who are saying not to go, but he knows what it is God has called him to do and not going is not an option. It is an issue of prophetic interpretation and what this shows us is how easy it is to take what you have been shown and then add to it. Many times, it is best to simply relate what the Lord has shown you and leave it all up to Him. We will see that approach with Agabus.

Paul and the team spend some time with the church in Tyre but then it is time to move on. The church accompanies them to the beach and then prays for them there.

Acts 21:7–14

“When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brothers and sisters, we stayed with them for a day. On the next day we left and came to **Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And he came to us and took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, “This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and hand him over to the Gentiles.’**” When we



had heard this, **we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul replied, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”** And since he would not be persuaded, we became quiet, remarking, “The will of the Lord be done!”” (NASB 2020)

First of all, we find out how Philip has been doing all of these years after his sideway rapture experiences. First was the Ethiopian Eunuch and then getting dropped off towards Caesarea. He stayed there and worked as an evangelist in this heavily Roman town.

He has four daughters, all with the gift of prophecy, but it is not their utterances that are recorded for us by Dr Luke, rather it is what Agabus, a prophet from Judea, has to say. We have met this man once before here in Acts and so has Paul.

Acts 11:27–28

“Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and indicated by the Spirit that there would definitely be a severe famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.” (NASB 2020)

Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem at that time as a result of the word from Agabus with relief for the church there. Now we see Agabus arriving to talk to Paul with a word he has from the Spirit for him. He says the same thing the other prophets said, but without the add on of “do not go to Jerusalem.”

Agabus has learned that it is best to tell everyone what it is the Spirit has shown him, without adding his own personal ten cents to it. There are times that the Lord may lead us to speak on His behalf a word to someone and we have no idea what it means, but if the Lord is prompting to say it to someone, go ahead and do so.

Agabus presented the message he had been shown, the only interpretation he provided we would not disagree with. It was those listening in who jumped to the conclusion that Paul should not go to Jerusalem. But Paul was called to go there, no matter what.

“This is the only clear example of this prophetic phenomenon in the NT. The symbolic action was accompanied by words introduced by “thus says the Holy Spirit,” a unique and apparently unprecedented formula. “This is the way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the one who owns this belt and will hand him over to Gentiles” (cf. Acts 28:17). Paul will indeed be put in a bind by Jews in Jerusalem, and he will indeed be actually bound by Gentile authorities (see 21:33), but he is not literally bound by the Jews nor is he handed over by them to the Gentiles...Agabus’s words have authority and accuracy in a general way, and serve as a further warning of trouble awaiting in Jerusalem.” (Witherington III 1998, 634)

Again, interpretation comes in and maybe it would have been better to just reflect what he had been shown. Do we see this today, yes we do. The challenge for us as a church is to not put out the fire of the Holy Spirit as I have witnessed other churches step out and do. We lean on what Paul teaches in 1 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 5:19–22

“Do not quench the Spirit, do not utterly reject prophecies, but examine everything; hold firmly to that which is good, abstain from every form of evil.” (NASB 2020)

First, we must be careful not to put out the Spirit’s fire. We don’t want to become skeptical, cynical, or unbelieving. Second, we must not develop a negative attitude toward prophetic words. Third, we must test everything by the Word and by the Spirit and pay attention to whether a word was given at the right time and if it proved to be accurate. Fourth, we must hold on to the good. (Brown 2018, 88)



And yes, there is indeed accountability for what the words we speak ostensibly as a prophetic utterance are. There will indeed be a day where we will be able to have a time where we wait on the Holy Spirit to minister to us, Paul gives us guidance on how to do that in 1 Corinthians 14 since the folks in Corinth were moving in the same circles as some groups do today. Looking for experience over the sound teaching of the word.

1 Corinthians 14:29–33

“Have two or three prophets speak, and have the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, then the first one is to keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints,” (NASB 2020)

Getting back to our text, Agabus did not say “don’t go to Jerusalem.” He simply told as a way of warning and Paul has heard this already from others. God has now confirmed and reconfirmed for Paul, what he is walking into.

His colleagues thought this was to stop Paul from going, but the purpose of the Holy Spirit was to prepare Paul, not to stop him. “The warnings of danger came from the Holy Spirit and were meant to prepare Paul. The request to turn back was understandable, even logical; yet it wasn’t of God. They recognized as much when they here attributed Paul’s insistence to go to Jerusalem despite the danger as the will of the Lord.” (Guzik 2013, AC 21:10-14)

Have you ever noticed that we all love to play Monday morning quarterback on many things. The problem is we are not the person who has had the time with the Lord, we have not experienced what they have. We do not know what the Lord has shown them and how He has worked in their life over the years to get them to the place where they are making or following through on some decision. I have had numerous folks want to “help” me and help correct what they see is a flaw in how I am following the Lord. You see, we all tend to believe we can see much more clearly than someone else can what it is they should be doing for the Lord.

For me, God has confirmed and reconfirmed where we are and what we are doing to plant Calvary Chapel Martin County. He confirmed multiple times we are to be where we are right now, yet we are also following Him to find a building for us to do church in and pick up other ministry as well. Pray with me on this please, because the simple fact we have been unable to find a place in Hobe Sound, might be the Lord’s way of moving us just a little bit down the road to another location. It is all in His hands, as always. For Paul, the third missionary journey is now officially at an end. Time to report.

Acts 21:15–22

“After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem. Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to stay. After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us gladly. **And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard about them, they began glorifying God; and they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. So what is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.”** (NASB 2020)

Paul knows what the Holy Spirit has called him to do and so, the entire team moves the 60 miles or so into Jerusalem and it appears they had already arranged to stay at the house of Mnason.



Paul and the team go to see the church there in Jerusalem and they are warmly greeted as friends and the team reports to James and the elders what it is they have been doing. The thousands of gentiles who are now followers of Jesus Christ and how God is doing a work. But based on the comments we read next, there has been a group, possibly the same one that caused Paul to change his plans and go to Troas rather than Syria, who have been busy spreading lies about the ministry. Organized religion, since they were more Jewish than followers of Jesus, was being asserted. The group of Pharisees who had become Christians, continued to be conspirators to force everything to go their way.

What James tells Paul is how many there were now in the Jerusalem church who were Jewish. "There was a minimum of twenty-thousand Jewish believers in the Jerusalem Church alone; it had become a sizable movement. These myriads of Jewish believers were all zealous for the law. The Greek word does not mean zealous as an adjective, but Zealots. The Jerusalem Church was largely committed to keeping the Law of Moses." (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 11)

Why would that be the case? Familiarity and the freedom to continue to be Jewish as followers of Jesus? Possible.

But based on the context and how James explains it, especially when you add in the issue that had taken place earlier in Antioch and Galatia leading Paul to write a letter to the Galatian church about Judaizers, I am going to go with spiritual immaturity. At Pentecost, thousands were saved and the need to be discipled to become more like Jesus was never more important than at the moment. There just weren't enough disciple makers to go around. And when Pharisees started getting saved, it became a problem as spiritual pride prevented many from taking part.

Here we are years later, the church has grown and it is rapidly becoming an organized religious entity unto itself. Many were "still spiritually immature, and, in their immaturity, they still felt they were obligated to keep the Law. But they were not sinning by keeping the Law, they were only wrong in making it mandatory." (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 11)

The unforeseen result, most of the church in Jerusalem followed the law and this, for someone who has been busy winning most of the gentile Roman Empire to Christ, is a problem.

Paul, a former Pharisee and persecutor of the church still has the cachet with those in the Temple leadership of being a traitor. And into this fertile ground, rumors are easy to start and tough to defend against.

By the way, we do know that at some point the funds that were collected were delivered by the aggregated group of believing gentiles who had traveled with Paul to Jerusalem. It was hoped and desired that this would be a unifying action. Paul told the church in Rome that was why he was going.

Romans 15:30–32

"Dear brothers and sisters, I urge you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to join in my struggle by praying to God for me. Do this because of your love for me, given to you by the Holy Spirit. **Pray that I will be rescued from those in Judea who refuse to obey God. Pray also that the believers there will be willing to accept the donation I am taking to Jerusalem.** Then, by the will of God, I will be able to come to you with a joyful heart, and we will be an encouragement to each other." (NLT)

But that was not the case. As we shall see, Satan has already plowed the ground and has those lined up to do his bidding.



What we are going to see is an attempt to get Paul to compromise in order to win over those who will never be won over. The issue that we last red about in Acts 15 which resulted in a win for the cause of Christ and for Gentile liberty in Christ, never really went away.

In Jerusalem the law was still very important, and anybody who suggested that it was not necessary or even proper to keep the ceremonial law was suspect. It was against this murky background of compromise that Paul was himself almost trapped into compromise by coming to Jerusalem. (Boice 1997, 360)

The rumors being spread about Paul are as follows.

Acts 21:21–22

“and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. So what is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.” (NASB 2020)

There has always been those within the world of religion who will lie about those who are being truly effective for the Lord. Always. The best lies are those which have a small element of truth in them, and then the whopper gets added.

I have heard the lies that have been told others about Calvary Chapel and about me. It is indeed difficult to combat a persistent story that has a thin element of truth surrounded by a whopper lie. Usually, the one who is into gas lighting will ask a series of questions to lead you to the impression that the person you are talking about has a problem.

Is it true that Paul teaches the Jews who come to Christ to abandon Moses? Have you heard he has even gone as far as to tell them they no longer need to circumcise their kids? And he worships on Sundays of all things.

It is easy to see how this could arise, and there is some small truth in it. When a Jewish person converts to Christ, circumcision and obedience to the law are no longer central, for their salvation is based on faith in Christ, not on the law. Of course, he has never said any such thing in any synagogue, only to those who have found Christ, and then outside synagogues in a Christian setting. Nor did he ever tell Jewish Christian parents they should not circumcise their children. So the only ones Paul has told this to are those Jews who have become believers, and he himself still keeps the law in many ways. (Osborne 2019, 384)

By now, those who were out to kill Paul early, know he is in town. So, the elders, who have already decided on a course of compromise, ask a rhetorical question, even though they already know what they are going to require Paul to do.

Is this good advice? Not really, it is going to backfire and do so big time. The Jerusalem church is more concerned about their own reputation than they are about Paul. The solution they came up with had already been started a few weeks earlier. Their plan was to show that Paul was still true to Jewish law and as part of that, already in process, four young men had taken a Nazirite vow.

Acts 21:22–26

“So what is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. **Therefore, do as we tell you: we have four men who have a vow upon themselves; take them along and purify yourself together with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and then everyone will know that there is nothing to what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also conform, keeping the Law.** But regarding the Gentiles who have believed, we sent a letter, having



decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and what is strangled, and from sexual immorality.” Then Paul took along the men, and the next day, after purifying himself together with them, he went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.” (NASB 2020)

“Paul was asked to join the four and bear the expenses of these rites. Aside from paying their expenses, Paul’s role in the matter is not altogether clear. He obviously did not join in the vow because the minimum period for a Nazirite was thirty days, and only seven were involved here (v. 27). Also it could not have been a matter of a Nazirite “purification” ceremony in which he participated. There was such a purification ceremony in connection with Nazirite vows, but it was not a regular part of the Nazirite commitment...The most likely solution is that Paul was the one who underwent purification. Often a Jew on returning to the Holy Land after a sojourn in Gentile territory would undergo ritual purification. The period involved was seven days (cf. Num 19:12), which fits the present picture (v. 27). Paul thus underwent ritual purification to qualify for participation in the completion ceremony of the four Nazirites which took place within the sacred precincts of the temple.” (Polhill 1992, 449)

I struggle with why Paul would allow himself to be dictated to by the church in Jerusalem. This is one of those circumstances where you sit back scratching your head and asking, why?

Think like Paul though, he is indeed Jewish and he truly wants to see his own people come to Christ. He is more than willing to submit and subvert his own best interests in order to see others come to Christ. In his letter, written just a few weeks earlier to the church in Rome, he says this.

Romans 9:1–5

“I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—that **I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.** They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.” (ESV)

Is this compromise? Yes. But Paul uses the grace he has from God to take this vow to win Jews to Christ. He tells us why in his letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 9:19–23

“For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. **I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.**” (ESV)

Will this work? Not at all, it will be used a pretext to allege things to try and enflame others. But Paul isn’t interested in anything other than winning others to Christ even at great personal expense. With that background, and in order for him to be consistent with everything he has taught, he agrees with the plan. I am so glad that things like that are not required for us to come to Christ in the first place. Yes, there are those who would indeed tell us otherwise even today. Judaizers are alive and well today as the Hebrew Roots Movement, most of those in that are not Jewish.

Are there things I would do to reach others that I wouldn’t normally do?



Absolutely. I have done some of them at times in my life only because it was an opportunity to present the gospel. For example, I would normally not consider taking part in a prayer breakfast for the community because normally they want you to stick to the script and keep Jesus out of it. But if there is no script, then I am in.

We need to be like Paul and let our faith speak to what it is we do. We are wanting to make disciples, and sometimes that does indeed mean being somewhere you would prefer not to be, or doing something you would prefer not to do. But there are indeed those times where we can say yes and see what the Spirit wants to do.

How do you come to have a resilient faith like that where you are willing to go somewhere and do something you know will get pushback. Simple, Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

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