

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 29TH–30TH // BOOK OF ACTS

A RIOT (ACTS 21:26–29) PURIFICATION

Paul had participated in a Nazarite vow with four other men, acting as their sponsor. The following day, they began the purification by going to the priest. Paul had to declare the end of the seven-day period so the priest could prepare the required offerings.

- During this time, Paul was expected to stay close to the temple to remain separated and focus on prayer.

PENTECOST

During this time, people were arriving from all over to visit Jerusalem and the temple for the Feast of Weeks, which was celebrated 50 days after Passover.

- This occasion was a time when the people would celebrate God's physical provision through the agricultural harvest and His spiritual provision through giving the law.

CROWD STIRRED

As they were going to make their offerings, some men who were passionate about their Jewish traditions noticed Paul concluding the purification process at the temple.

- Many of them had witnessed Paul while he was on his missionary journey throughout Asia. Misinterpreting his message, they falsely represented him to the crowd. **Fueled by their religious fervor, they erupted in anger.**

A GENTILE IN THE TEMPLE

To further incite the crowds, they proclaimed that Paul had brought Trophimus, a Greek from Ephesus, into the temple. Many of them likely knew Trophimus, as some of them were probably from Ephesus as well.

- Gentiles were welcomed into the "Court of the Gentiles" but could not go beyond that area. Anyone who violated this rule faced the threat of execution.

ARRESTED (ACTS 21:30–36)

PAUL WAS SEIZED

Due to lies, rumors, and the distortion of the truth, the mob seized Paul with the intention of killing him.

- Paul was in the temple to purify himself, motivated by his love for the Jewish people, the law (Romans 7:7), and God. The false narrative painted him as one who hated the Jews, the law they believed in, and the temple itself.
- **Ironically, their zeal for the law was leading them to break it by attempting to murder someone based on false accusations.**

THE TEMPLE DOORS SHUT

To prevent the mob and Paul from coming back inside the temple area, the Levites closed the doors leading to the Court of the Gentiles.

- The first instance of people being in the temple in Acts is right after Pentecost. In this final mention of people in the temple, which is also during Pentecost, the doors are closed. **God, working outside of the Jews' religious framework, caused them to be spiritually blind to the point that they rejected His messenger.**

THE ROMANS INVESTIGATE

Claudius Lysias, the senior Roman official in Jerusalem, quickly dispatched at least 200 soldiers upon hearing about the chaos in the temple. Since the garrison was located adjacent to the temple, they were able to intervene before Paul was killed.

- The Romans had learned that the temple could be a very volatile place, and it was Lysias's responsibility to maintain peace.

PAUL WAS BOUND IN TWO CHAINS

Holding true to the prophecy of Agabus, Paul was bound hand and foot. This was done in an attempt to calm the crowds so that Lysias could understand what was happening.

- The crowd was unable to reach a consensus about the events, with each person shouting different accusations. However, this did not deter them from trying to kill Paul. Their unity was fueled by blind rage to defend the law.
- **Even though the law was holy, we see how hearts filled with sin could easily corrupt it.**

PAUL WAS CARRIED

Even with approximately 200 soldiers present, the crowd remained restless, relentlessly pressing toward Paul.

- As the soldiers carried him away, the crowd shouted, "Get rid of him!" In Luke's writings, this clearly indicated their desire for the soldiers to kill him.
- Enduring all of this, even with the knowledge that it would happen, must have been challenging for Paul. However, **he knew his story was not over.**

IDENTITY (ACTS 21:37–39)

PAUL SPEAKS GREEK

Speaking Greek instantly revealed Paul as an educated man, not a mere rebel starting chaos. We see the shock in the commander's response as it grabbed his attention.

- Paul understood that this might provide him with some protection, even if only a little, and possibly the chance to present a defense.
- **As followers of Christ, our actions should be surprising and capture the attention of those around us.**

AN EGYPTIAN

Lysias was surprised because he assumed Paul might be the Egyptian assassin who had recently incited a revolt.

- Josephus provides more details about this self-proclaimed prophet who presented himself as the new Moses. He claimed that at his command the walls of Jerusalem would collapse like Jericho, exposing and defeating the Romans.
- However, most of his followers were either killed or captured as he fled into the desert. **Once again, we see people assuming the worst about Paul.**

CREDENTIALS

Paul cleared up the confusion and shared his distinguished background with Lysias, revealing that he came from Tarsus, one of the great university cities of the Roman world.

- God knew exactly why he had chosen Paul to be part of His plan. Paul now recognized how his background provided him with opportunities to connect with those others might not have been able to reach. **What opportunities has God given us?**

RELIGION

- What does it mean to be religious?
- **To follow God through external practices and beliefs (transactional). This includes doing the right rituals, checking off boxes, avoiding bad behavior, or seeking to earn approval.**
- **It is easy to observe others and see how they are missing the mark, but it is a lot harder to see when it is us. What "religious" battles are we fighting with others or ourselves? Why?**

SPIRIT-LED

- What does it mean to be Spirit-led?
- **We are driven by our internal relationship with God and love towards Him, desiring to go where He guides us. We recognize the beauty of the law as a guide for our lives, helping us understand what sin is, but we rely on the Spirit as the driving force to live transformed lives apart from sin.**
- **No, being Spirit-led does not mean we are perfect. However, it does mean we are continually being transformed day by day. How do we distinguish between the Spirit and our own desires?**

THE TEST

- Does it align with Scripture?
The Holy Spirit will never contradict Himself.
- What are the underlying emotions?
Us: Driven by anxiety or a frantic sense of urgency.
Holy Spirit: Peace, clarity, and patience.
- Who receives the glory?
You or God?
- Does it withstand wise counsel?
Do we welcome the discernment of mature Believers, or do we become defensive, hide details, or ignore their concerns?

IDENTITY

- When we allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit, we gain a deeper understanding of our identity in Christ.
- **Before Christ comes into our lives, we often flee from His love, burdened by feelings of brokenness and unworthiness. Yet, after embracing Him, we can finally receive His love and accept the incredible work He accomplished on the cross, which reveals us as worthy, holy, and righteous.**
- **If we're viewed this way, shouldn't we live accordingly? Do we truly grasp the depth of God's love for us? What are we willing to sacrifice for Christ?**