

Acts 21:15-30, Paul in Jerusalem
March 13, 1993
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Overview

1. 15-17 and 18-26 both emphasize the practical nature of Christian love, how it shows itself in actions.
2. 18-26 and 27-30 both emphasize Jew/Gentile tensions, and contrast the Christian and Jewish ways of dealing with them.
3. Thus these bring together Love and Differences.

A. 15-17, The Joy of Practical Christian Love

Three evidences of how love shows itself among believers.

1. Those of Caesarea accompany him on the way. Cf. walking someone out to their car, or seeing them off at the airport, instead of just waving from the door. Cf. 10:24, Cornelius waiting for Peter at the gate of Caesarea.
2. Mnason provides him lodging. Overall trip of 65 miles, too far for one day. Cf. hospitality as requirement for elders (1 Tim. 3:2); basic mark of Christian love.
3. The believers in Jerusalem receive him gladly. Rare word; in NT elsewhere only in 2:41, how people receive the gospel. They were literally "delighted" to see him.

B. 18-26, Christian Love Confronts Differences

1. 18, Only elders at this meeting; not open public reception. There were tensions before, ch. 15, and the leaders are wisely cautious.
2. 19, Paul's detailed report. As in 14:27; 15:4. NB: here he does not report to Antioch, but to Jerusalem, cf. 18:22. Perhaps he intends to go on to Antioch, but God has other plans.
3. 20-25, the elders' response.
Lots of discussion over this. Are they breezing over his report and imposing an unnatural and improper burden on him?

a) Data:

- 1) They begin by glorifying God for salvation of Gentiles. Should not question their motive.
- 2) Luke's Greek shows that their speech should be understood as continuing that praise, though this is not reflected in ET.
- 3) Greek *de* markers divide the elders' speech into three parts, at vv. 21 and 25.

b) So we have four steps in their reply. Examine more closely.

- 1) 20a, praise to God for believing Gentiles.

- 2) 20b, first section of speech: talks about believing Jews, and the Greek construction implies that this too is praise to God.
 - a> Not "Paul, it's great that gentiles are being saved, but what are we going to do about the Jewish believers?"
 - b> Rather, "Paul, that's great news, and we have great news too. Not only is the Holy Spirit saving Gentiles; look at how many observant Jews he's saving."
 - 3) 21-24, continues to discuss the believing Jews, this time in the face of a possible conflict.
 - a> 21-22, a false rumor is spreading about Paul's teaching, that he requires Jews to leave their Jewish practices.
 - b> 23-24, a specific suggestion: participate in a plainly Jewish ceremony in the temple to show that you still support Jews being Jews.
 - 4) 25 returns to the question of Gentile believers and recalls the agreement of ch. 15 that they need not become Jews.
- c) Summary: presented as ABba chiasm, where
- 1) Aa are references to Gentiles, Bb to Jews;
 - 2) AB describe praise over salvation in both groups, ab describe steps that the church has taken or should take to avoid potential problems.
 - 3) ==> This is a carefully crafted presentation that closes the loop from ch. 15 regarding the relation of Jews and Gentiles in the church. Both conferences
 - a> deal with relation of Jews and Gentiles;
 - b> begin with detailed report from Paul;
 - c> include James and the elders;
 - d> yield an agreement that resolves the issue.

4. 26, Paul's response.

- a) The setting:
 - 1) Nazirite vow (v.24, "shave their heads").
 - 2) Requires expensive sacrifices to complete, Numb. 6:14, two lambs and a ram.
 - 3) An act of piety to bear the cost for the sacrifices for poorer Jews; cf. Ant. xix.6.1 for Agrippa's pious action.
 - 4) ==> There are some poor believing Jews with a Nazirite vow, who need someone to bear the cost of their sacrifices. This Paul is asked to do.
- b) The action

Verb tenses are instructive here.

 - 1) Once, he takes the men and sanctifies himself with them.
 - 2) Repeatedly, he enters into the temple and announces the completion of their days of purification by offering a

sacrifice; apparently their terms end on different days.

- 3) He does this repeatedly until a sacrifice has been offered for each of them.

c) Paul and animal sacrifices?

- 1) He himself completed a Nazirite vow in 18:18-22 (started in Cenchrea; completed in Jerusalem); thus there also he would have offered sacrifices. 24:17 suggests that this time also he intended to offer sacrifice himself.
- 2) Ezek. 40-48 predicts animal sacrifices in a temple yet to be built during the earthly kingdom.
- 3) --> These are to be understood as memorials. Animal sacrifices were never efficacious, always only prospective of Christ; thus properly understood, they had a place in the devotions of believing Jews of the first century.

C. 27-30, The Unbelieving Alternative

1. Time: Pentecost (cf. 20:16), one of the pilgrimage feasts. There would be Jews in Jerusalem from around the world; some from Ephesus were there, whom Paul had encountered in Asia.

2. Their accusations of Paul:

- a) He teaches against the people, the law, and the temple. Seems to be the same accusation that the believing Jews have heard in v.21. But that was false.
- b) More seriously, he has defiled the sanctuary by bringing a Gentile within the wall, on which was a warning written, "No foreigner may enter within the barricade that surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death." See #169 in *Inscriptions Reveal* for picture of a fragment of this.

Luke comments that though Paul had an Ephesian gentile with him in the city, it was an assumption by the Jews that he had brought him within the enclosure.

- c) *Application*: Don't believe every rumor you hear about Christians; they are often started by unbelievers. Give brethren the benefit of the doubt.

3. Their objective: to kill him

- a) the warning on the inscription;
- b) v.31

D. Contrasting 18-26 with 27-30

1. Motive

- a) Christian: resolution and harmony; coexistence.
- b) Unbelieving: kill the offender.

2. Approach

- a) Christian:
 - 1) balanced. Considers issues of fairness and equality. "We're asking you to make a statement in support of the Jews; we ourselves have been willing to make one in support of the Gentiles."
 - 2) constructive: "Here's what you can do to help." Don't just bring a problem; suggest a solution.
 - b) Unbelieving: no openness to consider the other side.
3. Scope
- a) Christian: just James and the elders; private, small.
 - b) Unbelieving: demagoguery; spread accusations among the crowd.
4. *Application*: Our conduct toward other believers, even in dealing with differences, should be marked with tolerance and patience, not strife and a desire for victory.
- a) Not that we should accept everyone who says "Lord, Lord," as a believer--Paul's treatment of the 12 in ch.19 shows that.
 - b) But when we have decided that someone is a believer, we should live at peace with them.

Summary

1. Christians should show their love for one another through practical acts of companionship and hospitality.
2. Differences will arise within the church.
3. When they do, we should resolve them at the lowest possible level, seeking a joint solution through positive, constructive means.

Psalm: 100 (gathering in the temple)

Analysis

- A. 15-17, Caesarea to Jerusalem--The Joy of Christian Fellowship
 1. 15 Meta\ de\ ta\s h(me/ras tau/tas e)piskeuasa/menoi a)nebai/nomen ei)s (Ieroso/luma:
 2. 16 sunh^lqon de\ kai\ tw^n maqhtw^n a)po\ Kaisarei/as su\n h(mi^n, a)/gontes par' w(^| cenisqw^men Mna/swni/ tini Kupri/w|, a)rxai/w| maqhth^|.
 3. temporal p
 - a) time: 17 Genome/nwn de\ h(mw^n ei)s (Ieroso/luma
 - b) text: a)sme/nws a)pede/canto h(ma^s oi(a)delfoi/.
- B. 18-26, Interchange p
 1. Setting
 - a) 18 th^| de\ e)piou/sh| ei)sh/|ei o(Pau^los su\n h(mi^n pro\s)Ia/kwbon,
 - b) pa/ntes te parege/nonto oi(presbu/teroi.
 2. IU (Paul): circumstantial p
 - a) 19 kai\ a)spasa/menos au)tou\s

b) e)chgei^to kaq' e(\n e(/kaston w(^n e)poi/hsen o(qeo\s e)n
toi^s e)/qnesin dia\ th^s diakoni/as au)tou^.

3. 20-25, CU (Elders)

Imperfect->aorist shows background or manner nature of impf, BDF 327; te shows no essential change of subject, Levinsohn II 2.1. Thus we are to understand the request in 20b as being made in a spirit of praise to God, not a challenge.

Note overall chiastic structure of their response:

Praise for believing Gentiles

Praise-worthy report of believing Jews (te)

Practical concern for believing Jews

Practical concern for believing Gentiles

a) Praise for believing Gentiles

20 oi(de\ a)kou/santes e)do/cazon to\n qeo/n, sc. re. the
Gentiles

b) quote p

1) quote f: ei)^po/n te au)tw^|,

2) quote:

a> Praise for believing Jews

1> Qewrei^s, a)delfe/, po/sai muria/des ei)si\n e)n
toi^s)Ioudai/ois tw^n pepisteuko/twn,
2> kai\ pa/ntes zhlwta\ tou^ no/mou u(pa/rxousin:

b> Resolution p: Care for believing Jews

1> The challenge: a rumor

a: aq p:

1: aq f: 21 kathxh/qhsan de\ peri\ sou^ o(/ti

2: aq: specification p

A. text: a)postasi/an dida/skeis a)po\

Mwu+se/ws tou\s kata\ ta\ e)/qnh pa/ntas
)Ioudai/ous,

B. spec'n: quote p

1. quote f: le/gwn

2. quote:

a) mh\ perite/mnein au)tou\s ta\ te/kna

b) mhde\ toi^s e)/qesin peripatei^n.

b: 22 ti/ ou)^n e)stin;

c: pa/ntws a)kou/sontai o(/ti e)lh/luqas.

2> specification p: The resolution

a: text: 23 tou^to ou)^n poi/hson o(/ soi le/gomen:

b: specification:

1: setting: ei)si\n h(mi^n a)/ndres te/ssares
eu)xh\n e)/xontes e)f' e(autw^.

2: text:

A. manner: 24 tou/tous paralabw\n

B. text:

1. a(gni/sqhti su\n au)toi^s
 2. kai\ dapa/nhson e)p' au)toi^s
- C. purpose: i(/na
1. curh/sontai th\n kefalh/n,
 2. aq p
 - a) aq f: kai\ gnw/sontai pa/ntes o(/ti
 - b) aq:
 - 1) w(^n kath/xhntai peri\ sou^ ou)de/n e)stin,
 - 2) a)lla\ stoixei^s kai\ au)to\s fula/sswn to\n no/mon.

c> ampl p: Care for believing Gentiles

1> text: 25 peri\ de\ tw^n pepisteuko/twn e)qnw^

h(meis e)pestei/lamen

2> ampl: quote p

a: quote f: kri/nantes

b: quote:

1: mhden toiouto threin autous,

2: ei mh fula/ssesqai au)tou\s to/ te

ei)dwlo/quton kai\ ai(^ma kai\ pnikto\n kai\ pornei/an.

4. RU (Paul): 26 to/te o(Pau^los ei)sh/|ei ei)s to\
i(ero/n, imperfect: "went repeatedly," see ATR

a) paralabw\n tou\s a)/ndras,

b) th^| e)xome/nh| h(me/ra| su\n au)toi^s a(gnisqei\s

c) diagge/llwn th\n e)kplh/rwsin tw^n h(merw^ tou^ a(gnismou^

d) e(/ws ou(^proshne/xqh u(pe\r e(no\s e(ka/stou au)tw^n h(prosfora/.

C. 27-30, The Asian Jews accuse Paul.

--Shows the source of the rumor that the Jewish believers had heard!
Common slander against Paul.

--Note difference in handling the rumor between the believers and
the unbelievers.

--Time: season of Pentecost, thus city is crowded and devout
Asian Jews are there.

1. time: 27 (Ws de\ e)/mellon ai(e(pta\ h(me/rai suntelei^sqai,

2. text: oi(a)po\ th^s)Asi/as)Ioudai^oi qeasa/menoi au)to\n e)n
tw^| i(erw^| sune/xeon pa/nta to\n o)/xlon kai\ e)pe/balon e)p'
au)to\n ta\s xei^ras,

3. means: quote p

a) quote f: 28 kra/zontes,

b) quote:

1))/Andres)Israhli^tai, bohqei^te:

2) comment p:

a> text: ou(^to/s e)stin o(a)/nqrwpos

1> o(kata\ tou^ laou^ kai\ tou^ no/mou kai\ tou^ to/pou
tou/tou pa/ntas pantaxh^| dida/skwn,

2> e)/ti te kai\ (/Ellhnas ei)sh/gagen ei)s to\ i(ero\n

3> kai\ kekoi/nwken to\n a(/gion to/pon tou^ton.

4. reason: comment p: Luke's comment on circumstances.

a) 29 h)^san ga\r proewrako/tes Tro/fimon to\n)Efe/sion e)n

- th^| po/lei su\n au)tw^|,
- b) o(\n e)no/mizon o(/ti ei)s to\ i(ero\n ei)sh/gagen o(Pau^los.
5. result: people: General riot
- a) 30 e)kinh/qh te h(po/lis o(/lh
- b) kai\ e)ge/neto sundromh\ tou^ laou^,
- c) kai\ e)pilabo/menoi tou^ Pau/lou ei(^lkon au)to\n e)/cw tou^ i(erou^,
- d) kai\ eu)qe/ws e)klei/sqhsan ai(qu/rai.
- Symbolic: Judaism rejects its most faithful son.*