

Lesson seven was introduced with a very concise overview of the events leading up to the circumstances we find Paul living in when he writes Philippians. This week we will return to the book of Acts, entitled: Acts of the Apostles because it is an accurate, historical account of the acts of the Apostles (the things they did) and the planting and beginning of Christ's church! Walking through what has transpired in the life of Paul leading up to his imprisonment will help us better understand how intricately this letter written hundreds of years ago by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, just how much it applies to our lives today!

Acts 21-28 are rich with truth, but for the sake of time I will summarize and add context where necessary to help us walk through this in five days. However, I would encourage you to "dig deeper" and spend time reading through each chapter!

Now, let us turn to His word...and soak in the rich treasure of His truth, and allow our weary souls to soak in nourishment that can only come from Him!

Day 1

Today we will spend time meditating on Acts 21:17-26 making observations, interpretations and applications. Typically in my personal study I would take several days to meditate on each of the chapters we will cover this week, but not everyone enjoys my pace, so I encourage you to move at your own pace, if you would like to spend more time on a passage, do it, take your time, move at your pace, and enjoy the goodness of the Word of God!

Remember to spend time in prayer, repenting of any wrongdoing and asking God to illumine His word to your heart, allowing you to draw closer to Him!

Acts 21:17-26

"After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers *and sisters* received us gladly. ¹⁸ And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ After he had greeted them, he *began* to relate one by one the things which God had done

among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ 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;²¹ 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. ²² So what is *to be done*? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ Therefore, do as we tell you: we have four men who have a vow upon themselves; ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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.” ²⁶ 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.

Context is key:

We find Paul here, returning to Jerusalem at the end of his missionary journeys to report back to the Elders (church leadership) of the church who had sent him. His friends had pleaded with him not to go (Acts 21:4) after saying farewell to the disciples in Ephesus in Acts 20:22-25:

“And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that chains and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I

received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of God's grace.²⁵ "And now behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face."

The Holy Spirit was clearly leading Paul to go to Jerusalem and preparing him that he would be bound against his will. (Acts 21: 10-14) And would not return to see his beloved churches again.

Observe with me:

1. Were the elders thankful for the work God had done through Paul among the Gentiles? (vs. 20) _____
2. What was their concern? (vs.20-21)

There are two different groups of people here, the first is a group called Judaizers, they taught a false gospel, that you must put your faith in Christ and keep the law (faith + works) – this is heresy...a lie from the enemy! We must be very careful and remain on alert to anyone who tries to tie any kind of works to our faith in Christ for salvation, scripture is clear: Salvation comes by faith and faith in the work of Christ!

The other group are true Jewish believers. The Judaizers are stirring up dissention among the believers, like wolves picking off the weak ones in the herd, these new Jewish believers were easy targets for their divisive teaching. This is a great testament to how careful we must be in who we choose to surround ourselves with. Scripture is full of warnings against who we spend our time with and who we listen to. (email me if you would like to know more about this) ☺

3. What did the Judaizers teach? _____
4. Copy Ephesians 2:8-9
(if you don't have this memorized, memorize it this week!)

5. According to Ephesians 2:8-9, what saves us? _____

6. Copy 1 Corinthians 15:33

7. Why do you think Paul needed to emphasize his statement in 1 Corinthians 15:33, with: "Do not be deceived"?

8. What was the Elders' advice as to how Paul could silence the lies the Judaizers were spreading about him? (vs.23-24)

Paul was diligent in dying to himself in order give the hope of the Gospel to others, and these Jewish believers were no exception. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul lists all of the many things he did in order to win the lost for the sake of Christ!

We find Paul here, going to great lengths to not be a stumbling block for these Jewish believers, not only sponsoring the Jewish men who had made a vow, but undergoing an intensive time of cleansing as he had spent extended amounts of time in Gentile (non-Jewish) communities, and it would have been offensive to Jews for him to enter the temple without ceremonial cleansing.

What steps are we taking in our daily lives to protect our brothers and sisters in Christ? To win others for the sake of the Gospel and keep those who are saved from stumbling? How could we each improve? Turn to our Gracious Lord in prayer, asking Him to direct you to areas in your own life where you may need to "die to self" and "become all things" in order to win others for Christ.

Day 2

Read the following passage, making observations, interpretations, and applications.
Remember to pray before you begin! ☺

Acts 21:27-36

²⁷ When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, *began* to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him, ²⁸ crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who instructs everyone everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides, he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place!" ²⁹ For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they thought that Paul had brought him into the temple. ³⁰ Then the whole city was provoked and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. ³¹ While they were intent on killing him, a report came up to the commander of the *Roman* cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. ³² He immediately took along *some* soldiers and centurions and ran down to the crowd; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³ Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered that he be bound with two chains; and he *began* asking who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ But among the crowd, some were shouting one thing *and* some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks. ³⁵ When *Paul* got to the stairs, it came about that he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of

the mob; ³⁶ for the multitude of people kept following *them*, shouting, “Away with him!”³⁷ As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he *said to the commander, “May I say something to you?” And he said, “Do you know Greek? ³⁸ Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?” ³⁹ But Paul said, “I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people.”⁴⁰ When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying, “Brothers and fathers, hear my defense *which I now offer* to you.”² And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became *even* more quiet; and he *said...”

Observe with me:

1. The Asian Jews made three false accusations against Paul, List them here (vs. 28):

2. What did the vicious mob intend to do? (vs. 31) _____
3. Did the Commander bring any accusations against Paul? _____
4. Did Paul's being bound with chains appease the crowd? _____

5. Who did the Commander think Paul was? (vs. 38)

6. Paul spoke to the Commander in Greek (his language), in what language did he address the crowd? (vs. 40) _____

7. This phrase: “² And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became *even* more quiet...” it is striking...it validates a claim that the majority of these people didn't even know who he was. They had been stirred up from the people shouting false accusations against Paul, believing the narrative fed to them, allowing their emotions to take over...filled with hatred and rage they sought one thing and one thing only: Paul's death.

There is a valuable lesson for each of us here. Let us not be quick to follow the crowd. Let us always remember to hold everything we do up against the lens of Scripture, allowing God's Word to not only inform, but direct our decisions.

Finish today's study out in prayer, asking the Lord to reveal to you any areas of your life that you may not be living fully for His glory, surrendered to His will.

Day 3

Our text left off yesterday with Paul beginning to address the Jews in Hebrew. Paul, after these people have tried to murder him, gains their attention and shares the hope of the Gospel with them. He didn't try to defend himself, or his name...he had one focus: the Glory of Christ Jesus! One of Paul's regularly practiced methods of sharing the Gospel was to simply tell his story and that is what we see Him doing in Acts 22, he shares his testimony of how he was saved before the people.

Most people don't have as dramatic of a testimony as Paul did, however, we each have a story, a great story of our own personal Salvation. If you have never shared the Gospel through your testimony, I challenge you to do that this week! God gave you a story, so use it!

The angry mob listened to Paul's testimony for a while...right up until he said:

Acts 22:21

And He (Jesus) said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'²² They listened to him up to this statement, and *then* they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a man from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!"

The Jews were so angry that Paul would claim to be sent to minister to the Gentiles, whom they despised, to teach that they could be saved without first going through the procedures of becoming a Jewish proselyte...so angry by this that they wanted him dead! The Jews of that day had allowed their being God's chosen people to puff them up with self-focused pride! This was never the intention of God! The Jewish people, the people of Israel were to be set apart, as a beacon of hope that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that He is the One True God, never was the Law intended to puff up!

After this, the Commander orders him sent to the barracks to be scourged (a brutal Roman method of interrogation). Paul graciously reminds them that he is a Roman citizen – it was unlawful to scourge a Roman citizen and the commander would have lost either his job and livelihood or his own life for carrying it out even by accident.

The Commander then had a meeting of the Sanhedrin (Jewish leaders made up of Pharisees and Sadducees) in order to find out why Paul was being accused by the Jews. A great division breaks out among them over the resurrection of the dead. The Commander, being afraid Paul would be killed on his watch, orders Paul to be taken back to the barracks.

Paul's nephew overhears of a plot against his life – over 40 Jewish men had vowed to not eat or drink until Paul was killed, so they made a plan to trick the Commander into moving Paul for further questioning. Paul's nephew goes to Paul to tell him of the plot and is taken to the Commander to inform him. This is where we pick up the text for today:

Read the following passage of Acts making observations as you read, mark it up!

Acts 23:23-35

"And he called to him two of the centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two

hundred spearmen.” ²⁴ *They were* also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor. ²⁵ And he wrote a letter with the following content:

²⁶ “Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings.

²⁷ When this man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, after learning that he was a Roman. ²⁸ And wanting to ascertain the basis for the charges they were bringing against him, I brought him down to their Council; ²⁹ and I found that he was being accused regarding questions in their Law, but was not charged with anything deserving death or imprisonment.

³⁰ When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you.”

³¹ So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. ³² But on the next day they let the horsemen go on with him, and they returned to the barracks. ³³ When these *horsemen* had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. ³⁴ Now when he had read *it*, he also asked from what province *Paul was*, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia, ³⁵ he said, “I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive as well,” giving orders for Paul to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.”

Observe with me:

1. Paul had quite the entourage escort him to Caesarea to meet the Governor, list the military escort God provided for Paul through this Roman Commander:

2. What charges did the Commander have against Paul in his letter to the Governor? (vs.29)

Isn't that just like our God? My Granny has many times in my life encouraged me to journal, I fail to do it as regularly as I should, but it is always a blessing...her encouragement has always been that just like the people of God were seen throughout the Old Testament building an altar or taking memorial stones - it is a way for us to have a reference point to remind us of the goodness, the faithfulness of God! Why is this so important? Because when we are walking through the dark valleys, it may be difficult to see the light...when we are walking through a storm, it may be difficult to see the lighthouse! In those moments it can be such a rich blessing to remember the great things He has done!!

Spend time today praying and journaling about the amazing things He has done!!

Day 4

We left off yesterday with Paul awaiting the Jewish accusers to arrive for a formal hearing before Felix, the Governor. The Jewish High Priest, some elders and their attorney arrive and make three accusations against Paul: first, they claimed he had incited a riot with his words (a violation of Roman law), next they claimed he violated Jewish law by leading a sect of the Nazarenes, finally they accused him of violating

God's temple. They had no proof of any of these charges, because the charges were not true which Paul goes on to testify too in Acts 24:10-24.

Then Felix, for no apparent reason other than mere procrastination, maybe he was trying to appease the Jews, but he didn't make a decision. He continues to hold Paul, bringing Paul before himself and his wife for conversations from time to time. We learn in 24:25 that Felix was convicted by Paul's teaching, but abruptly hardened his heart to the truth. But he continued to hold Paul hoping to gain a bribe to free Paul. Chapter 24 closes with this very telling statement: "wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned."

This all seems quite hopeless, doesn't it? Almost like God has forgotten Paul...yet Paul's heart is unwavering...

Chapter 25 of Acts opens with a second plot by the Jews to kill Paul, Paul gives yet another defense before the new Governor, Festus and the Jews who had come, now: "bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove." (vs. 7) Paul ends his defense in verse 11 by appealing to Caesar which was his right as a Roman citizen. The remaining verses of chapter 25 are comprised of Felix asking King Agrippa and his sister Bernice who had come for a visit to hear the case of Paul. King Agrippa, who was: "...an expert in all customs and questions among the Jews..." (26:3)

We will pick up here, during Paul's defense before King Agrippa for our observations today, read the following text, making observations, interpretations and applications. As always, begin with prayer, asking God to illumine His perfect Word to you:

Acts 26:9-29

“So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

¹² “While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, ¹³ at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. ¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ ¹⁵ And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; ¹⁷ rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’

¹⁹ “So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰ but *kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first, and *also* at Jerusalem and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. ²¹ For this reason *some* Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death. ²² So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; ²³ that the Christ was to suffer, *and* that by reason of *His* resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles.”

²⁴ While *Paul* was saying this in his defense, Festus *said in a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind! *Your* great learning is driving you mad.” ²⁵ But Paul *said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. ²⁶ For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.” ²⁸ Agrippa *replied* to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”²⁹ And Paul *said*, “I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.”

I must confess, reading this text just now has me in tears! Oh! the beauty of the redemption of our blessed Savior!

Observe with me:

1. Paul lists several things he did to “oppose” Jesus of Nazareth (Christians, also referred to in Scripture as: “the way”). List those below (vs. 9-11):

2. Who appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus? _____

- a. This encounter with Christ is what designated Paul as an Apostle, not merely a disciple. Christ appeared to Paul with the intention to “appoint” Him (vs. 16). There is a great weight of authority given to the thirteen Apostles listed in scripture, each one would go on to die the death of a martyr...this, dear ones is not an office to take lightly or a title to be thrown around. Scripture is full of proof texts that the Age of the Apostles has

passed, that God's Word is complete and there is no new revelation, no new prophecies. We now have the full counsel of God's Word, let us focus on that and not be distracted by all of the tricks of the enemy. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

3. Who does Paul state first testified of the truth of Salvation in Christ? (vs. 22-23)

4. What did Festus accuse Paul of (in a loud voice) (vs. 24)

**Paul had been trained by Gamaliel (the leading Rabbi of their time) which is what gained him access to teach in the synagogues in the various cities he visited on his missionary journeys – such a reminder that God prepares us, sometimes even before we know it for the work He has planned for us!

5. What was King Agrippa's response when faced with the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? (vs.28)

6. Copy verse 29 below:

***What a revealing statement of what truly burdened Paul's heart... his priority was seeing the lost saved...Christ glorified!

Day 5

Begin today with prayer, humbly confessing your sins and seeking God's forgiveness, asking Him to penetrate your heart with His Word.

We left off yesterday with Paul's defense, which was really a masterful gospel presentation to King Agrippa. The chapter closes with the words of Agrippa: "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar." Yet another profession of Paul's innocence.

Chapter 27 begins with the decision to sail to Rome. Their sailing was going slow as they were experiencing contrary winds, verse 9 tells us, "When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous...". It was late in the season and it was not wise to sail during that time of the year. So, Paul admonishes them that to sail during this time would not only cost them their cargo, but maybe even their lives!

Before long they encounter what was known to those who sailed the Mediterranean as Euraquillo, this was a strong, dangerous windstorm.

This was a frightening circumstance for the most veteran of sailor. Verses 18-20 record: "The next day as we were being violently storm-tossed, they began to jettison the cargo; and on the third day threw the ships tackle overboard with their own hands. Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned."

They continued being battered by the wind and the storm for two weeks (vs. 33) finally being shipwrecked on a small island called Malta. Paul is then gathering fire wood and bitten by a viper. The locals assume he will die, but when he doesn't, they mistake him for a false god. They remain on the island for three months until it is safe to sail again. Paul spends his time ministering to the locals. They then enjoy a rather uneventful travel

to Rome. Upon arrival Paul is greeted with believers who have traveled to Rome to encourage him and he is placed under house arrest, still chained to a Roman guard.

Now that we fully understand the context Philippians is written in, let's review this text:

Study Philippians 1:1-13 making observations, interpretations and applications:

“Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers
and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ *For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. ¹² Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for

the greater progress of the gospel, ¹³ so that my imprisonment in *the cause of* Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,¹⁴ and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.”

As this week's study comes to a close, let us be strengthened by the Word of God, growing within us a heart unwavering in the face of disappointment!

I pray that this has been a blessing to each of you! Be blessed!