

The discipline and recovery of Paul

In Acts 21:27-28 begins the discipline from God to the apostle Paul for compromising his doctrine and going into the temple to make a vow. This is after one week of obedience and allegiance to his vow. On the seventh day when Paul stood up to announce and promote his religious vow, that is when his discipline began. He has had six days to repent or to change his thinking. However, he is out of fellowship mentally and therefore disoriented to the grace of God. That started by being out of the geographic will and therefore out of the operational will of God.

Act 21:27 ***“And when the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the multitude and laid hands on him,”***

The phrase “stir up” is from the Greek “sugcheo” which means to throw an assembly into disorder or confusion.

Here is how a riot gets started, and therefore the confusion starts. The Jews spotted the very one who had preached grace now in a Temple which promoted works and he is promoting works himself. Paul is standing there starting to give his goofy legalistic testimony and here comes the enemy! Actually, here comes the providence of God and divine discipline for the apostle Paul. Remember these are religious self-righteous people and they are evil and viscous.

In ACT 21:28 ***“crying out, Men of Israel, come to our aid!***

This is the man who preaches to all men 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.”

Verse 28 is merely a summary of everything that they shouted while attacking him. Some people were yelling, ***“He is against the people!”*** Others were yelling, ***“He is against the law.”***

Some were yelling, ***“He has brought Gentiles in the Temple.”***

“He has polluted this holy place.”

Mental attitude sins are the domineering characteristics of the religious self-righteous people, especially jealousy. There is one mental attitude sin that always characterizes religion, jealousy. The Jews from the Roman province of Asia are jealous. They started a riot back in Ephesus against Paul and now they see Paul in Jerusalem. They are about to do something which is a characteristic of jealous people: condemn you without a trial. When they say in verse 28 that Paul has brought Greeks also into the Temple, it is a lie.

They are referring to Trophimus, but Trophimus is not in the Temple. They merely said this because they are jealous and jealous people are not interested in the facts. As one of the oldest sins in the human race, existing in eternity past when Lucifer, the son of the morning, became jealous of God. The first case of jealousy in the human race occurred when Cain became jealous of his brother Abel and murdered him.

These Jews are jealous of Paul and they want an excuse to kill him or hurt him. There are two important points here:

1. These Jews are religious and they are wrong.
2. Paul is out of fellowship because he has compromised with religion and is in the Temple, and he is wrong.

God is going to use religion to discipline Paul under the principle of Gal 6:7 ***“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”***

Paul's sin of going into the Temple is religious in nature! Paul who is the apostle of grace, has suddenly turned religious again. As Peter said in 2Pe 2:22 ***“It has happened to them according to the true proverb, A dog returns to its own vomit, and, A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.”***

Paul has gone back to that which God has delivered him from.

The true side of religion is jealousy, hostility, antagonism, lying, gossiping, hatred, and overt revenge.

Act 21:30 ***“And all the city was aroused, and the people rushed together; and taking hold of Paul, they dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.”***

The word aroused means to stir up in violent emotion, to disturb, to be caused to riot. Here it has to do with the emotion of the soul, the worst place to be moved or manipulated.

In Act 21:31 ***“And while they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the {Roman} cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.”***

This is the result of religious people who have become emotional, arrogant, vindictive and jealous. Suppose they could have destroyed Paul, what would they have done? They would have done absolutely nothing but promote the word of God.

2Co 13:8 ***“For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth.”***

They are fighting against Bible doctrine and grace. Even if they killed the one who teaches it, they cannot eliminate it because the word of God lives and abides forever, 1Pe 1:23.

Religion, Legalism and Emotionalism will always persecute, because all three have no concept of freedom! The most precious thing that man has is his free-will and Religion, Legalism, and Emotionalism take it away.

Notice who delivers Paul. Act 21:31 ***“And while they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the {Roman} cohort”***

The Roman cohort is the commander of the Roman Empire and here is what was reported. ***“that all Jerusalem was in confusion.”*** There was a riot in Jerusalem.

Act 21:32 ***“And at once he took along {some} soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.”***

This was the beginning of Paul's divine discipline for going into the Temple, compromising his doctrine and making stupid vows. The Jews attacking Paul were being used by the omniscience of God but they could only attack and not kill the apostle Paul, because the wicked are restrained by God.

Paul could have very easily been killed, however, he is under divine discipline and he will be under the effects of this discipline for five years. Even though he recovers, the repercussions of this thing are going to continue, for almost five years he will be under Roman custody and under Roman protection.

Rome represents law and order. The Jews had failed to maintain law and order and because they were an unstable population, the Romans could not permit the Jews to have the freedom they desired. The Jews were too religious and religion takes away the people's freedom. Rome would not permit the Jews self-rule because the Jews had demonstrated that they were not capable of self-rule.

A principle we need to note here is that as long as Paul is alive God has a purpose for his life. There was at least three times in the book of Acts when Paul could have died. But God had a purpose for his life and that purpose was to write half of the New Testament and to teach the mystery to the Gentiles.

At this point, Paul is out of fellowship and no believer can fulfill God's plan unless he is in fellowship with God; therefore Paul must rebound and recover.

So in Act 21:33 ***“Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he {began} asking who he was and what he had done.”***

He is trying to discover the reason why Paul has been beaten by the Jews. This Roman soldier finds Paul with the majority against him, being beaten, stoned and he still tries to find out all the facts and the proper information.

Remember that in Jerusalem we have thousands of believers.

We were told that in verse 20. Notice that while the Jerusalem church gives no help or support to the apostle Paul, he has now fallen into the hands of the Roman Empire who's emphasis is

on law and order and they will support and protect the apostle Paul. The Jerusalem church is filled with carnal, legalistic and judgmental believers. They are believers who are carnal whereas in Rome we have unbelievers who are moral.

Where law and order does exist, it is better to fall into the hands of a moral unbeliever than a carnal Christian. There is nothing worst than a carnal Christian except a **group** of carnal, self-righteous legalistic ones.

We have noted many times that God has established the divine institutions to protect human freedom. You will find that you can trust fair-minded law abiding unbelievers more than carnal Christians, that's because a carnal Christian is called

The enemy of God, Jam 4:4; The enemy of the cross, Phi 3:18; A hater of God, Joh 15:23; Spiritually double-minded, Jam 4:8; Anti or against Christ, 1Jo 2:18,22; Disciple of the devil, 1Jo 3:8,10; Tortured souls, 2Pe 2:7-8; Unstable souls, 2Pe 2:14; Lukewarm believers, Rev 3:15-16; Jealous and carnal, 1Co 3:3; Cause divisions, 1Co 3:3.

Ignorance of doctrine and compromise has ruined the Jerusalem church. On the other hand, cognizance of doctrine and compromise has ruined the apostle's Paul's ministry **temporarily**. Think of the hypocrisy of the Jerusalem church. They were hungry and starving and Paul brought them a large financial gift because he cared for them. Paul tried to help them, but Legalism, Emotionalism and Religion are implacable. This shows you how terrible believers can be.

In verse 34-36 we see the problem and the total confusion.

“But among the crowd some were shouting one thing {and} some another, and when he could not find out the facts on account of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. And when he got to the stairs, it so happened that he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; for the multitude of the people kept following behind, crying out, Away with him!”

These should familiar words.

In Luk 23:18 ***“But they cried out all together, saying, Away with this man,”*** concerning The Lord Jesus Christ.”

Religion hated The Lord Jesus Christ, Religion hated Paul.

Carnal believers betrayed The Lord Jesus Christ, Carnal believers betrayed Paul.

There's no record that the Jerusalem church offered any prayer for Paul as they did when Peter was in prison. When Peter was in jail, the church prayed him right out of jail but there's no record for any prayer for Paul.

It would take Paul about two years to recover from the influence of religion and legalism.

In Phi 3:13-14 we have the estimate of the situation.

“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”