

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on April 11, 2021:**

**"Transformation of the Early Church Series on
The Book of Acts – Paul's Arrest and Self-Defense [Part 1]
(Acts 21:17- 23:35) (Part 21)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman on Zoom shows us how Paul and the early Christians went through so much effort, stress and sacrifice to bring forward the Gospel message of grace and faith, which is so precious.]

Introduction:

- Here's what's happening in our congregation.
- First, we want to thank Nancy Stonick for stepping up as our new treasurer.
- And we also want to thank Manny for all of the time, effort and service that he has put in as he has asked to step away from that role.

- Secondly, we're in the midst of a survey about our returning to the Y, which is the end game for us.
- Our response reminded Pastor Craig of what Dan Rodgers once said about the working of the Holy Spirit in us as a congregation.
- He said that when all of you are face a crossroad, find out what on the hearts and minds of the pastoral team as well as the members.
- And if there is not a clear emphasis of agreement on a particular situation, then the Holy Spirit is telling you to wait.

- That's where we are right now – we don't have a clear agreement.
- Instead of going to church in the near future with a lot of restrictions, a lot of members want us to wait until we can have worship again with music and singing and no restrictions.
- By the way, there's no mandate from our denomination saying that you have to have a vaccination before you can attend services again.
- So far, there have been 33 responses: 11 said yes to go back together as soon as we can; 15 said no, let's wait and 7 said yes, but had strong reservations.

- Pastor Craig has thus decided that we should continue with having church on Zoom.
- Now if some of you have the thought that getting together physically rather than digitally, as we are here on Zoom, is a more holy and sacred response to God, you are not correct.
- Our church service on Zoom is holy and sacred.
- But, our end game is to get back together again just as things were which may not occur for a while yet.

Overview outline of today's message:

1. James and Jewish customs (21:17-26)
2. Paul's assault and arrest (verses 27-36)
3. His defense before the crowd (verses 21:37-22:22)

4. How Paul was protected by Roman law (verses 23-29)
5. Before the Sanhedrin (22:30-23:11)
6. The Jewish plot to take Paul out (verses 12-35)

Overview comments:

- We need to understand why Luke spent so much time focusing on Paul's troubles in Jerusalem.
- It's important for us to see how much effort, stress and sacrifice it took for the early Christians to bring about the gospel.
- At the foundation of bringing the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, there was a lot of contention.
- And Paul was right at the center of that, which caused a lot of stress for him.
- It took a lot to bring people together to experience God's grace.

- Now the 2nd thing that Luke brings out is that the Roman commanders stood up for Paul, which ultimately endorsed the Christian church in the Roman world as long as peace was maintained.
- We will also see that the Jews and Gentiles in the church were split over certain practices such as circumcision and clean and unclean meats.
- We'll see God working through all of these disruptive, negative events to strengthen the church and to spread the gospel further and further.

Poetic Preview of today's message – Pastor Craig's rhyming verses:

*Paul meets in Jerusalem with leaders, James and the Rest,
Issues over Moses, law, Gentile & Jew, and purification no Jest.
Once again, at the temple this time, crowds began to Shout,
They began beating Paul wanting to throw him Out.*

*Commander of Roman troops came to Paul's Side,
Placed him in chains assuming wrongs he couldn't Hide.
Paul requested a hearing so he could present his Case.
Began speaking Aramaic they quieted providing him Space.*

*Paul began his defense by sharing his Story,
How he persecuted believers not to God's Glory.
Then how we was blinded when he met up with the Lord,
A voice and bright light led to grace being Outpoured.*

*What shall I do Lord? Was the question Saul Asked,
He went on to tell how with the Gospel he was Tasked.
It was time to include Gentiles into the people of God,
Now the crowd cried out wanting him beat with a Rod.*

*One more time they created such a Stir,
About to be flogged, to his Roman citizenship asked they Defer.
Now the Roman army became a little Perplexed,
Uncertain what to do with this authority Paul now Flexed.*

*Being born a Roman citizen carried some Clout,
The kind the commander couldn't just Flout.
So he gathered the Sanhedrin to join in the Mix,
Hoping with them this problem had some Fix.*

*Paul addressed the Sanhedrin and was struck on the Face,
He then responded and railed at this Disgrace.
Paul not knowing he was the ruler and high Priest,
He then relented and his railing he Ceased.*

*Seeing the Sadducees, Paul appealed to his Pharisaic Line,
The assembly now divided; his strategy worked so Fine.
Pharisees against Sadducees and Paul in the Middle,
Turns out the commander was played like a Fiddle.*

*So Paul was removed, and God spoke to him that Night,
Take courage to testify in Rome without any Fright.
Another group of Jews formed, bound with an Oath,
Paul can't exist, not with us Both.*

*Their plot for his death was revealed to Paul,
Then safely taken to Governor Felix avoided it All.
Felix received the letter and provided a safe Place,
In Herod's palace, awaiting accusers they received God's Grace.*

Acts 21:17 NIV), When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us warmly. 18 The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. 19) Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20) When they heard this, they praised God.

- James, the brother of Jesus, who was now the chief elder of the church in Jerusalem, and all the other elders praised God for what He was doing through Paul in converting the Gentiles.

20) When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law.

- We see that old habits and/or beliefs die hard for the Jewish people.
- Many had become believers in Jesus but were still keeping all the old covenant laws.
- The new covenant says that salvation and grace now comes through faith in Jesus and not through some external works of the law.

21) They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. 22) What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, 23) so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. 24) Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. 25) As for the Gentile believers, we

have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.”

- James and Paul agree doctrinally in that they both believe that salvation and grace now comes through faith in Jesus alone.
- And then there’s the ethical and practical side – and for the Gentiles, James had given them four things as we see in verse 25.
- Now, Paul wasn’t backsliding or making concessions that weren’t appropriate.
- But, he was now obeying royal law of love, which could be demonstrated in a couple of different ways to the Gentiles, such as what we saw James wrote to them.

26) The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.

- Now remember, Paul had already shaved his head just before he traveled to Jerusalem.
- He might have been inspired by the Holy Spirit to do this to prepare for his purification at the temple.

27) When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, 28) shouting, “Fellow Israelites, help us! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place.” 29) (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.)

- Paul didn’t do that, but his critics used this false story about bringing a Gentile into the temple, which broke Jewish laws.
- Now, the Christian Jewish concept of a proselyte was that a Gentile should become a Jew first, by being circumcised, before he could be evangelized to become a believer in Jesus.
- In other words, the Jews didn’t think that a Gentile could become a Christian without first becoming a Jew.

30) The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. 31) While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32) He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

33) The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. 34) Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks.

- This event of Paul reminded Pastor Craig about the time when Pilate asked the Jewish crowd if they wanted Barabbas crucified, which they said no, but they wanted Jesus crucified.

- As we can see, a lot of horrible events took place in order to ultimately make the gospel available to us today.

35) When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers. 36) The crowd that followed kept shouting, “Get rid of him!”

- Can you imagine what Paul felt like after going through all of this?
- He obviously felt terrible and feared for his life.

37) As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, “May I say something to you?” “Do you speak Greek?” he replied. 38) “Aren’t you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the wilderness some time ago?” 39) Paul answered, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people.”

40) After receiving the commander’s permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic:

- This is a good place to stop our part one.
- We’ll pick up on Acts 22 next week.

(Closing prayer)