

## 2083 - PAUL CAPTURED in JERUSALEM - Acts 21.27-40

PRELIMS. Paul has returned to Jerusalem to meet the Church there. The tension between the ‘hard-line’ Jews and the liberated Greeks resulted in a ‘**plan**’ for Paul to join other Jews in taking vows of purification, to pacify the Jews in making them think the **rumours** about Paul were **not true** – rumours that he was against Moses etc! So Paul and 4 Jews ‘dressed’ in ‘vow gear’ are in the Temple!

Well, the **plan** did **not work**! It was not successful! It did not pacify the Jews. Now there was **nothing wrong** with this plan – it was not breaking any commandment **nor** was there the sacrifice of a doctrine. These laws were **cultural** and it was **not** now **necessary** for Jews or Gentiles to keep these laws. And it certainly was **not wrong** to **dedicate** themselves to the Lord – Xns of course would now worship through the Lord Jesus Christ, which most Jews rejected!

I am sure Paul was ‘led’ into this move. **APP** We need to remember that being ‘led’ into something does **not** necessarily mean a **smooth passage** or success! Christ was **led** into the wilderness **to be tempted** of the devil [Mat 4:1] God’s plan for us is complex and it is **usually** through **rough** places! We live in an age when even Xns are unwilling to sacrifice for the Lord. Their decisions are based on **their personal desires** and **ambitions** rather than on the will and purpose of God! Many Xns today have **lost** the **purpose** of their **lives** by seeking personal satisfaction rather than seeking the glory of God!

The Jews *seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd* [27] These Jews were determined to **discredit** Paul. That was the **one** thing they wanted to do! **APP** There are those who have an **ambition** to **pull-down** someone they hate. These Jews were filled with revenge. Revenge is **worse** than hatred. Revenge is **active** and must ‘get its own back’! Revenge must punish – it cannot ‘let someone off’! We must **never succumb** to revenge *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord’* [Rom 12:19]

**Why** were the Jews so angry and revengeful? **Two** things. (1) They

**believed lies/exaggerations/misrepresentations.** People were **talking** about Paul and as they talked about him, they got **'worked-up'** about him. And it **developed**. Their tongues became **'loose'**! *This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere **against** the people and the law and this place* [28a]! So easy to **exaggerate**! Paul was not against 'people', Jews or Gentiles – no one **loved** people more than Paul. He **risked** his life, again and again - **especially** for **Jews** - in order to help people of **all nationalities** to 'get right' with God!

I believe Paul was a **warm** person. I believe he could **open up** his **heart** very quickly and give help/advice to anyone, whatever class. Paul did not 'shy-away' from people, especially Jews. I believe when Paul saw a Jew sitting alone and **looking sad**, his heart would 'flip' in **sympathy** and say to himself 'Does he know the Messiah?' Then he would go up **alongside** him and try and get **into conversation** in order to bring **comfort** to him. He would do it as wisely as possible.

Neither was Paul **against** the law or the Temple. In fact, he was there in the Temple **respecting** the **order** and **observing** the law of **purification** in public for 7 days! Paul did **not** teach these laws were now wrong. When the NT 'dawned' the OT laws did not **automatically** become **wrong** – they just became **obsolete** as the **reality** had **replaced** the shadows. There was a **gradual** blending-in of the NT as more 'light' and understanding was given! Paul would 'worship' God through Christ the Reality, rather than the shadows which were still being administered in the Temple.

**2nd reason why** they became angry: **jumped to conclusions** without proof! Someone, earlier in the day saw Paul & **Trophimus**, a Gentile 'in the street', walking about town! And then when they saw Paul in the **temple** they jumped to the conclusion they were **both** in the temple!! Now it was **sacrilege** for a Gentile to go beyond the **Court** of the Gentiles (the Court **was** a special place for Gentiles!) but to go **beyond** into the sanctuary of Israel, that was **unforgivable!**

Josephus says there was 'a **stone wall** for a partition, 4.5ft high, with an inscription which forbade any **foreigner** to go under the **pain** of **death**'! FF Bruce says that in 1871 and 1935, two notices in Greek

had been found reading ‘No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death’!

The unbelieving Jews, filled with prejudice and bias, had what our Catechism condemns as ‘**willingness to hear a bad report**’! That is actually a terrible sin – to be glad and willing to hear a bad report about someone we dislike! Instead of ‘**sorrowing** over, and **hiding** the weaknesses and failings of our enemies’, we are ready to receive the worst of news regarding them! That is a big **sin** in God’s eyes!

\***Jumping** to conclusions - they said *he even brought Greeks into the temple* [29]! What evidence did they have for that? None! they only **supposed** that Paul had brought him![29] So easy to make conclusions without evidence!

**APP** It is just **too easy** to make assumptions. *Judge not* (unless we are appointed to be a judge!) That is why Jesus insisted that even if we **have** evidence, we **first** go to see that person **ourselves**. If we have made a mistake, we apologise profusely! If he denies and we want to ‘take it further’, we bring another ‘brother’ along, and then if still denies we take it to the Church! [Mat 18:15-17] We must **learn** to **leave** judgment with God – unless absolutely necessary. Let’s learn from the Archangel Michael: *disputing about the body of Moses, he **did not presume** to pronounce a blasphemous **judgment**, but said ‘The **Lord** rebuke you’* [Jude 9] Or Paul: *do **not** pronounce judgment **before the time**, before the Lord comes* [1Cor 4:5]

Well they **seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple**[30] (where was Trophimus?) Now, although the Romans were guilty of X’s death, later on they were really **very helpful** towards Xns and freedom of religion and they prided themselves on **justice**! And rightly so – the **pax romana** was a great help towards justice!

*as they were seeking to **kill** him, word came to the tribune of the cohort...he at once took soldiers and centurions...they stopped beating Paul...ordered him to be brought into the **barracks** the **safest place** in all Jerusalem for Paul!!* [31-34]

**Confusion** among the rabble *shouting one thing, some another* [34] thus because no clarity of offence, safe custody for Paul! Such was the **violence** that Paul was *actually carried by the soldiers...* 'Away with him, away with him' [35] Who does that **remind** you of? At Jerusalem too! **APP** What **indignity** to be carried away to safety! Imagine seeing **your pastor** being carried by the **police** because of what he believed and **said** in a 'free society'! But **if** Paul did **not live** and **speak, you** here today might never have heard the gospel! This was all part of **missionary work** – **humiliation**! Are **you ready** for it? \*A few years ago, in Cheshire two schoolboys were disciplined for not kneeling down and praying to Allah! [ET from The Telegraph]

The Jews were not the only ones to assume! The chief official Claudius Lysias also **assumed** that Paul was an **Egyptian terrorist**! *Are you not the Egyptian...who recently stirred up a revolt and led the 4,000 men of the Assassins out into the wilderness* [38]

Sadly, very sadly, there is a **stigma** even in being **accused/arrested**! Thus Sir Cliff Richard - no evidence - as yet - but **he** is nevertheless stigmatised and the accuser, even if in error, will still be **anonymous**! There something wrong when that is permitted! It is a sign that we are a nation 'under judgment' to God. When we call *evil, good, and good, evil*, we are the same as Israel during Isaiah's time, when he wrote *...for they have rejected the Law of the Lord of hosts* [Isa 5]

But as soon as Lysias heard that Paul was a Jew he immediately protected him! \*\*And now we see the **real/true** Paul. In the midst of his mugging, he has one consuming passion – Read [Rom 9:1-4] *I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness... I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites...!!! Because of this one consuming passion Paul said I beg you permit me to speak to the people* [39]! It is people like this that the world should honour–sacrificial love!