**May 19, 2022**

**BIBLE STUDY**

**Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

3750 Washington Street, Sanford, FL 32771; www.RefugeSanford.com

**Elder Joel Brooks, Pastor**

**Bishop M. Ruel McCoy, Sr., Diocesan**

**“PAUL’S PURIFICATION”**

**Acts 21:17-29**

***Acts 21:17 "And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly."***

***Acts 21:18 "And the [day] following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present."***

***Acts 21:19 "And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry."***

Apostle Paul’s third missionary journey ends here. To imagine that the rest of the book is an appendix is to miss Luke’s purpose. The worldwide spread of the gospel is continuing. Rome has not yet become part of the narrative; Paul’s commission has not been realized. He must bear witness both in Jerusalem and Rome. These verses show the love that all of the early church had for each other. We, also, see the great position that James (the half-brother of Jesus) had in the church at Jerusalem. If there ever was a doubt that James is the head of that church, this Scripture settles it. Paul shows great respect to James here. Saluted means greeted them with respect. This was as if he were reporting to James and the elders, the accomplishments the Lord had made through him in all the churches he had established.

***Acts 21:20 "And when they heard [it], they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:"***

We see, here, a group of people claiming to believe that Jesus is Messiah, but they undoubtedly did not accept his crucifixion as being total payment for all sins for everyone. If they are still keeping the law of Moses and still sacrificing, then they did not understand Jesus was the perfect Lamb sacrifice of God. They are hanging on to Judaism with one hand and claiming to be Christians on the other hand. They cannot have both. Those zealous of the law are under the law and not grace, because that is where they have placed their trust. This problem could be due to not enough extensive teaching of the Truth.

***Acts 21:21 "And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise [their] children, neither to walk after the customs."***

We see that they are accusing Paul of teaching not to circumcise the men not to keep the law of Moses. This truly is what he has been teaching what he should have been teaching. The circumcision of a believer is in heart. The Mosaic laws and customs are not for believers, either. For the believer, God has written His law on their heart. These two schools of thought prevailed then and now, as well. There was the group who believed in grace and there was the group looking to the law. They are like oil and water, they don't mix. These Jewish converts to Christianity are not willing to give up their old customs. They are angry with Paul for telling the truth. In Matthew 5:17, we see that the law was not done away with but fulfilled by Jesus. Some were saying Paul was telling Jews to forget about their Jewish heritage when they came to Christ. But that wasn’t true. Though Paul clearly told all people (Jew and Gentile) that salvation came through faith in Christ alone, he didn’t argue that Jewish customs couldn’t be practiced. After all, Paul had Timothy circumcised to make it easier for the two of them to conduct ministry among the Jews (16:1-3). Circumcision is not a problem as long as one doesn’t rely on it for salvation or sanctification.

***Acts 21:22 "What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come."***

***Acts 21:23 "Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;"***

Paul's message from the beginning had been salvation through the free gift of Jesus Christ, not of works. Now all these (Christians?) have decided you must circumcise and live up to the law. Had Paul taken a stand right here, and said we are not under the law, he possibly could have made a case in favor of grace, but as you see in the next few verses, he conforms somewhat to the law himself. We can read about the Nazarite vow in Numbers chapter 6. Christians fast, Jews take a Nazarite vow.

***Acts 21:24 "Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave [their] heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but [that] thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law."***

Since they are forming the conduct of the church for centuries to come, it is very important what kind of stand they take here. The question is {is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ sufficient to take care of the obligations of the church}, or should we all go back to the practice of sacrifices? This would have been the moment for Paul to make a declaration on what is correct to do. We were not there, so we could not say this for sure (only speculate).

***Acts 21:25 "As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written [and] concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from [things] offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication."***

The obligations to be a Christian should be the same for all mankind. If Gentile believers are required to refrain from things offered to idols, from blood, from strangled, and from fornication, then that should be the requirements for the Jewish believers, as well. The church in Jerusalem and Peter had sent a letter to all the new Gentile churches that these few things were the only requirement. It appears to me, that they still have the wall of partition up between Jew and Gentile, even though the curtain in the temple was torn from the top to the bottom when Jesus was crucified. God had torn down the wall, and now these Jews are putting it back up: all the while proclaiming to be followers of Christ who tore it down.

***Acts 21:26 "Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them."***

Paul knows that he has been made pure by the blood of Jesus Christ. This has to be just a show for these Jews to be accepted of them. We Christians, when we receive Christ, put on his righteousness and we are pure.

***Acts 21:27 "And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,"***

The temple in Jerusalem was a symbol of the law. Religion is whatever you do habitually. These Jews had never truly understood the meaning of the law. They were just repetitiously carrying out these rituals. This is not a religion of the heart or spirit, but a religion of flesh and custom. They looked on the outward man, while God was interested in the inner man. These Jews of Asia had been a problem all along. They really wanted to kill Paul, but God had kept them from it. Now they have followed Paul to Jerusalem and stirred up the people.

***Acts 21:28 "Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all [men] every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place."***

***Acts 21:29 "(For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)"***

You can easily see, from these verses above, why it would be an impossibility to mix Christianity and Judaism. Christianity teaches that God is the Father of all who will accept Him, Judaism teaches God is Father of just a very small select group. Jesus taught that we are not to be a respecter of persons, Judaism taught that the Jew alone was worthy to come into the temple. Judaism taught keeping of the law, Christianity teaches love and grace. Jesus had rightly called them stiff-necked and whited walls. Everything these Jews were associated with in the temple had to do with cleaning up the outside of man. Jesus Christ taught the cleaning up of the heart of man by washing in the blood of the Lamb. There was no way these two could be meshed together into a compatible religion.

**QUESTIONS**

1. How were Paul and his companions received by the leaders in Jerusalem?
2. Which leader did Paul go to see in Jerusalem?
3. What is meant by Paul saluting them?
4. What good news did Paul bring them?
5. How many Jews did they say believed?
6. What was peculiar about their belief?
7. In verse 21, what did they reprimand Paul for teaching the Jews?
8. How many men were involved in a Nazarite vow?
9. In verse 24, these Jews told Paul to do what?
10. Why had they taken the vow?
11. Why is it so important for Paul to take a stand for Christianity right here?
12. Is there a difference between the obligation of a Jew and Gentile?
13. Who had torn the wall of partition down between Jew and Gentile?
14. What did Paul do in verse 26, that signified he was pure?
15. How is a Christian purified?
16. Why did Paul do this in verse 26?
17. What was the temple in Jerusalem a symbol of?
18. What is religion?
19. What three things did these Jews from Asia say Paul taught against?
20. In verse 27, what did they do to Paul after the seven days?
21. How did they say Paul had polluted the temple?