

Date: February 7, 2021
Series: Acts
Message #51: "DEFERENCE FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL"
Text: Acts 21:17-26
Speaker: Pastor Steve Balvanz

This section is titled "Deference for the Sake of the Gospel" because it describes Paul's gracious attempt to exercise his spiritual liberty in order to remove unnecessary offenses that might have prevented Jewish people from listening to him yet doing so without compromising God's word.

I. The Warm _____ (v.17-20a)

II. The Serious _____ (v.20b-22)

The Judaizers had drilled into the minds of thousands and thousands of Jews in Jerusalem that Paul was an enemy of Moses. This created a huge problem for Paul's reputation and credibility with the Jews and a formed a huge roadblock to his ministry in Jerusalem.

III. The Proposed _____ (v.23-26)

The elders' plan was for Paul to prove that the rumors and lies about him were untrue by having him participate in a couple of ceremonial aspects of the Law.

"Whether Paul was wise in doing what the elders suggested may well be doubted...but he cannot be fairly charged with compromise of his own gospel principles. On the contrary, he was acting in strict accordance with his own stated policy (i.e. 1 Cor. 9:19-22)." (FF. Bruce)

1 Corinthians 9:19-22

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.

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Paul is the consummate example of using one's spiritual freedom in Christ for the furtherance of the gospel! He is our role model for graciousness, flexibility, adaptability, deference, and accommodating in relating to unbelievers. He strove to eliminate any unnecessary barriers between him and them with the goal of sharing the gospel with them!

"Paul did not compromise the gospel. He would not change the least truth in the least way in order to satisfy anyone. But he would condescend in any way for anyone if that would in any way help bring him to Christ. He would never set aside a truth of the gospel, but he would gladly restrict his liberty in the gospel. He would not offend Jew, Gentile, or those weak in understanding." (John MacArthur)

"As soon as you say, "I have made myself slave to all" (v.19), and "I have become all things to all men" (v.23), you are on the brink of idolatry and compromise and worldliness and sin. You are walking the razor's edge between fruitless separatism and unprincipled expediency. If you fall one way, you are of no use because you have no connection with the world; if you fall the other way, you are of no use because you are just like the world." (John Piper)

Conclusion:

May God help each one of us to pursue the lost, to adapt, to flex, to defer, to adjust our preferences and tastes to put ourselves in a place of influence to share the gospel with the hope of rescuing sinners from the wrath of God and having them receive the gift of eternal life.

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