

We are in *Part 5* today of *God's Work Through Paul*.

Last Sabbath we were covering a certain portion of the book of Romans, a book that Paul had written about, and again here, yet he hadn't even been there yet. He hadn't visited there yet. But as was mentioned last Sabbath, there were people who came in on Pentecost who were of that region, and they had gone back. That's the way a lot of this began, through those who were called out of Judaism first. So, they went back into those areas, and now Paul is addressing it in a manner that comes along, as time goes along here, gentiles were coming along. So, God was calling gentiles, opening their minds as well.

So anyway, we're going to pick it up here in Romans 12. I think it's good to pick up some of these things that he wrote about. It gives a bit of a perspective in a sense of thinking about what he was dealing with. But just as well, I should say, just for the purpose of, if you will, to help us to grasp what an awesome thing God did in working through him to reveal so much. Because he wrote more than anyone else for scripture and the foundation of things that we have needed that have carried through the past two thousand years in a very powerful way.

So, incredible calling that Paul was given for an incredible purpose, and we've been going through some of that.

Romans 12:1—Therefore, I beseech/implore you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice. So, I love this where it dovetails in with things that happened in the Old Testament. Some of the book is going in that direction as well to help clarify things so people in traditional Christianity who have no knowledge as a whole of the Old Testament can begin to see why certain things were done or given. And hopefully, as time goes along (it will happen as God calls) but help people to begin—at least to plant seeds—to begin to see this process of change that we all go through when we're called.

So again, "living sacrifices." That's what our life is about. It's not about a temple. It's not about offering up sacrifices there. All those things pictured that later on that we would be called, God's people would be called, and this is what we're to dedicate our lives to in that respect – alive, living as far as our lives are concerned.

...holy. Because God is in it, we desire God's spirit, we cry out for God's spirit, we desire to be forgiven of sin. And when the word "holy" is used, that's what it's about; it's about God's spirit, it's about setting something apart for holy use and purpose. We've chosen to do that with our lives.

...acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. So, for every one of us who is called, it's our reasonable service to yield ourselves to this process. **And do not be conformed to this world.** So, that's a

battle we have. That's what everyone has to do, don't allow yourselves to begin looking to the world or be conformed to the way the world does things. On the contrary, we have a responsibility to strive to live a certain way of life that has standards, that has order, that obeys the law of God. That's something we have to fight against our own carnal nature to accomplish on a spiritual plane. A lot of these things can be accomplished in the beginning more physically. As time goes along, something is to happen in the mind to where it becomes more spiritual.

That's what it basically goes into in this verse. **And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed.** Transformed, in the way we think. Again, that's a growing process the entire time we're in God's Church, from the time we began even before we were called, or as we were being called, I should say, and then up to the time we became baptized, and then until this is over with, we work to have our minds changed, the way we think.

...be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. I love the way some of these are stated and they're put together. Because that's what we're to do. We're to strive to apply ourselves like this in the sense of understanding this transformation that is to take place in our minds. Then by living this way, by doing these things, we prove God's way is right, we become actually in greater agreement with God as our minds are transformed. That's what it's all about, His will, not ours. Awesome!

Jumping on over to **Romans 15:22** it says, **Wherefore, also I have been greatly hindered from coming to you.** This is to Rome. **But now no longer having a place in these parts and having a great desire these many years to come to you...** So, almost as it were early on from the beginning his desire was to be able to go there and to be or work with the people whom God had called.

...whenever I go to Spain... So, this comes out at different times. His desire was to bypass that area, go on over into Spain. There are some that believe he might have gone there. There's really no evidence whatsoever in any of the writings that he ever made it there. It appears more so that once he went to prison in Rome or was under house arrest for that two years that he didn't go that direction, but he instead went into other areas of Asia to the Church, hoping to, striving to reestablish things that had already been given to them.

So, he says, **Whenever I go to Spain, I will come to you. For I trust to see you...** And that's not how he got there. What an incredible thing to go through a story like this. He planned on going to Rome and he had planned, he wanted to, so he was planning at different times if he could to go through there on his way to Spain of all things, but he made a detour through Jerusalem and then he went over in a manner that he wasn't planning on. This kind of a story is really quite awesome when you go through and see the things he went through.

Sometimes we might have a certain desire in our minds and maybe feel that God is working within a certain manner. It was God's purpose for him to go there in time, but not in exactly the way he thought.

Again, there are things there, but we're not always given the entire picture of something, and that's his case; that's the way it works.

He goes on to say here, **For I trust to see you soon on passing through and to be helped on my way there by you, if at first I might enjoy your company for a while.** Before he goes on to Spain. **But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints.**

For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. And it pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. So again here, the Church was helping out in an area where they were having trouble, some trouble because of the Roman rule, but other times because of the conditions of drought and so forth.

For if the gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. So, well put. They have been blessed to be able to drink in of the spiritual things that have come from the apostles, from there, and that God has done, and so the least in essence that he is saying they can do is to help them when they're needing something on a material plane, a physical plane.

Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, as it says, "produce; profit; prosperity," whatever it is, but probably in more forms than one. But again, as far as he was travelling, it's hard to see how they might have been able to take certain foods there. But maybe that's a part of what it means. But this word can be used for that which they had as far as profit that they were able to share in their lives.

So, I will go by way of you to Spain proclaiming the good news of Christ. Again, doesn't exactly work out that way, but he still made it to Rome.

Romans 16:17—Now I urge you, brethren, mark... So, this comes out a lot with what Paul has to say. It started when he became aware of people who were leaving the Church very early on and he said he marveled because they "were so soon removed from the truth that God had given to them." Then later on, different ones who were causing problems and so forth, and again, people leaving. Then the matter of Corinth that we talked about when he said that an individual should have been put out and they shouldn't have allowed that to continue on, and in essence, they were just as guilty because they allowed it to continue on. They were sinning by what they were doing by allowing sin to exist in the Body of Christ. That's where he talked about then "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" and what can happen to a congregation and so forth.

So, this is really very good because this is a problem that has existed from the beginning of people being called out of the world, coming into the Church, sometimes for the wrong reasons, sometimes as time goes along have developed the wrong reasons and begin to bring other things along and try to pull others aside and go a different way. It's happened a lot. People come in with different ideas, this

“teacheritis” or whatever it’s called that sometimes happens in God’s Church, which we have dealt with extensively even since the Apostasy in PKG and people feeling that they had something to give and something to preach about and they wanted time to do it.

And basically, like at one Feast, one individual who was a graduate of Ambassador came up to me and asked, “Who are you? You haven’t given me anything to speak at the Feast! I haven’t been given a sermonette; I haven’t been given anything to say. Who do you think you are?” You know, I think I’ve mentioned this before, but you think, if you don’t get that picture, you’re in the wrong place. And then later on, obviously, it became clear that he was in the wrong place. But this kind of thing has always been out there. Or people coming along and trying to bring certain sin into the Church. Whatever it might be that human beings can come up with, it’s happened in the environment of God’s Church over time, especially over two thousand years.

And so, Paul deals with it head on. I am convinced and convicted with all my being that this has been a blessing to PKG because God has blessed us, God has blessed me in being able to be moved by this kind of thing and to realize how dangerous it is to allow false doctrines, to allow false practices to exist in the Church. They are to be put away, put out. Either we are a part and we’re in unity and oneness or not.

And I know why it’s been given at this end-time because the Church must be cleansed before Christ returns. That’s why that gift has been given in the sense of being able to see these kinds of things and work with those kinds of thing because we are being worked with in a very powerful way. Truly. To be made whole and complete by Christ’s coming, and everything else to be gone.

He says, **Now, I urge you, brethren, mark...** A word in the Greek which means “take heed to; to observe; to look on in the sense of being alert to or be careful of; watch out for” **those who cause division and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.** Turn aside. Turn away. Then there is more to that he places in other scriptures as well.

For those who are such do not serve our Lord Joshua the Christ, but their own belly, their own appetite, whatever it is they want, whatever it is they’re lusting after, desire for self. It’s not about the welfare of the Church. It’s about what they’re going to get out of it or what they want to get out of it. ... **their own appetite, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts...** It says “**simple**” but it’s **the innocent or the harmless.** Like a wolf in sheep’s clothing or whatever. It’s that which has always existed in the environment of the Church. Again here, that need to be on guard.

So, we’ve been very blessed in the last many years here with a greater unity and oneness than ever in God’s Church because we’re so small and because of the method and the means by which we can communicate today all over the world with one primary message, as it were, and everyone else being in unity and harmony with that and being able to know if something goes off course.

I remember early on that some got up and spoke, and I'd have to get up and correct it. And eventually, that was too hard for some. Well, most of them. I think everyone that I had to do that with as a whole left in time. The reality is if something is given that's not true or not right or off balance, it has to be brought out. And thankfully, we've had that ability in the Church.

So, it goes on to say here, **For your obedience has been known to all.** So again, what a great compliment going on here, "your obedience." So, that just moves and inspires people to want to do that all the more in the sense of really focusing on it and striving to be a right example and a right light and to be alert to things that might come up or happen that aren't in order or unity with the Church.

So he went on to say, **Therefore, I am glad on your behalf. But I want you to be wise in what is good, and pure concerning evil.** So again here, there are ways of dealing with things and we have to be able to tell the difference when something is wrong and be able to address it.

And the God of peace will in quickness crush Satan under your feet. The word "shortly" is not there. So again here, showing that the end of all this is going to be blessed, and that power that exists in the world to cause deception and deceit and problems and so forth will be beyond that. But it's a while in coming. We have to fight until it's over with and then we'll receive it.

He goes on to say, **The grace of our Lord Joshua the Christ be with you. Amen.**

So, I think it's good to go back now to the flow in Acts, so we'll return to the book of Acts. And in that flow where we left off going through Paul's travels, we left off in Acts 20, which was covered in *Part 4*, about a man named Dimetrius in Ephesus who had stirred up the city, accusing Paul and the Church, claiming that they were now turning people away from their goddess, Diana, and stirring up the people because of that. We went through that. We're going to read the last of those verses here. I guess it's really the first three verses in Chapter 20 and then continue in the flow where we left off.

As a reminder here of what we've covered. **Acts 20:1.** So again, this is **After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples** (again, "pupils; students") **and, bidding farewell, even to depart to go to Macedonia.** So again, going to go up in that northern region above Greece and some of the cities up through there, Philippi and the like. I'm not sure if Philippi might be part of Greece, but it's going up into that region.

Anyway, so he, **bidding them farewell**, it says, **Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece.** So again here, it's just going down from out of Macedonia then down toward Thessalonica and on down toward Athens if he went that far. We'll get there in a moment.

And says, **he came to Greece and stayed three months. Then, when the Jews plotted against him, as he was about to sail to Syria,** (to the area of Antioch), **he decided to return through Macedonia.** So again here, changing. Most of the time he went over land but a few times by ship, obviously. We know some of

those stories. But this time here, he was going to sail toward Syria but decided to go through Macedonia again. So, it's here in Greece, while he was there, that Paul wrote that epistle to the Romans in the spring of 58 AD.

Continuing in **Acts 20:4—Now, there accompanied him to Asia Sopater of Berea and Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy.** So again, kind of in that area going up out of Greece, moving up out of Greece into the areas of Macedonia again in his travels.

And it goes on to say, **and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. But we sailed away from Philippi.** So again, Philippi. It was, if you come up from Thessalonica just around the bend there a little bit, I'm pretty sure, it's in that particular region before you go on into the places of Asia there heading toward perhaps Ephesus or other parts of Galatia or wherever he might have gone. But it's at the top part of the sea there.

So anyway, it talks about him, they **sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.** So, they get very specific here about where they were going. But again, this is just barely getting into that part of Asia, coming back down into it. So, they'd gone up around the loop from Greece, all the way around from Macedonia, and now in this particular area.

Now, on the first of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, intending to depart the next day, preached to them and continued speaking until midnight. Now, there were many lamps in the upper rooms where they were gathered together. Reminds me of someone who was able to speak a long time in the Church at one time. But this is unique and different because they didn't get to see anyone very often. They didn't have tapes coming out from headquarters. They didn't have a lot in that respect, local ministers. They had different ones that helped in the areas, and in time, that began to grow. But in the early days, there wasn't a lot.

So anyway, it talks about him speaking for a long period of time here. **And in a window sat a certain man named Eutychus who fell into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep, and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken away dead.** So, their places weren't big. They weren't really that large, and so people getting a place wherever they could. This wasn't a good place to pick that late at night, obviously, and falling asleep. And it says, "fell down from the third story and was dead."

Verse 10—But Paul went down, got down beside him, and embracing him said, Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him. Then he went back up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while until daybreak. Then he departed. Then they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little bit it says, **comforted** here, the way it is expressed. But "mightily" in other words. Some of these expressions sometimes they used, "not a little bit." He just said the opposite "of a lot" in the way he put it together.

So again, it's exciting to see someone like this go through this and fall that far and to live through it when they'd believed he was dead. And maybe had been dead, doesn't say absolutely.

But **verse 13** it goes on to say, **Now, we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given direction, intending himself to go on foot.** Again, going to go over land down to Troas, to Assos, just below Troas. **And when he met us in Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene.**

When you look some of these pronunciations up they're not easy. They're not terms we would normally use or words we normally use, so I think a lot of this stuff that's older like that, too, they're not in existence today as they were, and so words change, pronunciations change, people, migrations, and so forth.

It says, **We sailed from there, and the next,** it says here **came opposite of Chios.** So, these towns being mentioned, again, aren't that important, but they're telling how they continued moving southward, and they just kept it as a part of their diary, ever who was writing and keeping the record of all this.

Then it says, **The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed in Trogyllium. And the next day came to Miletus, for Paul had decided to set sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, by the Day of Pentecost.** So he, again, had this in his mind this is what he wanted to do, and set out to do it. Again, as is mentioned earlier, plans don't always work out the way you want.

From Miletus, it says he sent off to Ephesus to call on the elders of the Church. Now, when they had come to him, he said to them, You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which came upon me in the plotting of the Jews.

So again here, he's sharing with them things they already know but not seeing them very often opened up a great deal to them to tell this story very personal to him and very personal to them. And again here, this very close relationship because of, again, of not being together very often, not seeing somebody for a long time. It's a kind of a unique thing. It's kind of like when you go to a Feast, and you see all the people you haven't seen for a long time and the excitement of that and the sharing of things you share.

But they were sharing in things that had caused a lot of pain, a lot of suffering, things that they had gone through and the continual things that were happening because of Jews who were in the region who continued to harass and come after them in different times in different ways to create problems.

So, "You know," again, "from the first day, what manner I lived among you, and the humility," he says, "the tears" and so forth, "the plotting of the Jews," **how I kept back nothing that was helpful.** So, he just gave all that he could. That's what it's saying here. Different way of saying that. Anything that might be helpful. **...but proclaimed it to you and taught you publicly and from house to house.** So again here, this

process of teaching them where he could like they had for some time there in Ephesus at the synagogue until he left from there.

I've been trying to think of the other location he went to, and I can't even think of that right now. I spent quite a long time there in Ephesus obviously, teaching and working with the people, getting to know them really well, but then going away for some time and then coming back again, going through all these trials that they shared along the way.

So he, again here, spoke of this being in Jerusalem, wanting to go down there for the Day of Pentecost. "Going from house to house," verse 20. Now, **verse 21—testifying to Jews, and also to gentiles, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Joshua the Christ.**

Verse 22—Even now I go bound in spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there. So again here, kind of awkward for him because all the Jews there in the beginning weren't all that comfortable with him, maybe still weren't somewhat comfortable with him, but knowing Judaism and what he was going to come up against there because of the Jews in that area especially, because this is where they are even more fortified and dug in in the sense of being able to come at people in the Church. They caused incredible harassment and harm to the Church throughout these periods of time, the leaders of the Jews did. It didn't stop, obviously, after Christ was killed; it continued on.

So anyway, it goes on to say here, reading it again, **bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the holy spirit testifies in every city, saying that bonds and tribulation/afflictions await me.** So again here, all the things he's talking about here, knowing that wherever he goes this is likely going to be the consequence. "There are going to be tribulations, there are going to be afflictions that take place no matter where I go," and this is being revealed through the holy spirit given to him and to others.

They were continually trying to move him away from crowds, as we read earlier, when they're displeased. Because Paul would be the primary target, and so they're telling those things and talking about how that even bonds, to the point of being taken captive or whatever, put in a prison is always there as well.

But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my race with gladness, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Joshua. So, that's what he was focused on. That's what he kept doing regardless of what else might happen.

...to testify to the proclaiming of the good news of the grace of God. Even at this present time, look, now I know you all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God. It says here in essence, **will see my face no more.** So, those things given to him by the holy spirit. That's what he was talking about earlier, and this was what was in his heart and his mind, that he's not going to make it back there again because of all the things that were in front of him. He wanted to be able to go on to Spain, he

wanted to go through Rome, he wanted to get down to Jerusalem by Pentecost, and so plans were not necessarily then, obviously, to go back to that area.

Verse 26—Therefore, I take you as witness this day that I am innocent of the blood of all. For I have not kept back to declare to you the whole purpose—says “counsel”—but the whole purpose of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has made you overseers. So again here, talking to those who were there to continue to help work with and help the Church as it says, to feed or nurture the Church of God which he purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departure grievous, which means “violent or devouring” wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

So again here, he was moved by that because he knew that when he wasn't there it was going to be easier for that to happen, for individuals to come in and to disrupt or hurt the Church.

Verse 30—Also, from among yourselves, men will rise up. So, he's saying even within the Church. Incredible! And this is fairly early on. **Also, from among yourselves, men will rise up speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples/the pupils after themselves.** This has been the history of God's Church from the beginning. It's never ceased. Two thousand years of this even within the Body.

Therefore, watch, be alert, be on guard, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. Again, we have it so easy. They didn't. It was very harsh. The Church being started, getting started, the kind of world they live in, the society around them, the kind of people that were there.

So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities and for those who were with me. So again, he was very clear about what he always set out to do. He was a tentmaker, and he worked. He did not want to take of their tithes, which he mentions in another area of scripture that he had the power to take but didn't. It was for their welfare in the sense of their being able to receive him more readily and what he was able to do in those areas as God was raising up those Churches in those particular areas of the gentile world.

Verse 35—I have known you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Joshua, that he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. So again, this admonition he's just giving them at this point in time as he's getting ready to leave and trying to encourage them, help them to keep focused.

Now, when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept much and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that

they would see his face no more. Then they accompanied him to the ship. So again, very moving for them, for the whole group, and what he was telling them was going to take place.

Again, it's hard for us to relate to these kinds of things because we don't live in that kind of world, and we're not persecuted as they were by any means, not to any level like they were. Ours is very, very mild in respect, in comparison. Their lives were literally in danger so often, not knowing what people would do, how they would do it, and the like. So again here, they went through a lot in the beginning, and it was still going on by the time he left.

Acts 21:1—Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail on a straight course to Cos, the following day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. Then finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, he went aboard and set sail. And when he had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailing to Syria, and landed at Tyre. Again, very explicit here about every place they went and the things that they addressed here. So, he's telling them about everything they did.

Again, travel at that time, trying to find a ship if it was going somewhere wasn't like here where you could pick a time of day and it's somewhere on a wall that you could read what time this was leaving. They might have had some things written there, but it wasn't very often that you could hook up like this. You just had to take what was there.

And when he had sighted Cyprus, it says, we passed it on the left sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to upload her cargo. Then finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. So again, different places they went and then finding disciples.

Then they told Paul by the spirit not to go to Jerusalem. So again here, they were moved by God's spirit. It's saying here very clearly that he shouldn't go there. Again, this happened over and over again where different ones tried to protect him, tried to keep him from doing something because they knew the dangers were there, and being of God's spirit warning Paul what you're heading into. God knew what Paul would do. God knew. When He works with an individual like that and gives him various things to do, He knows the mind.

But when we had completed those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, until out of the city. Then we knelt down on the shore and prayed. So again here, this example here that they're setting of what they do and how they did it at that time. Over and over again, when they met with a group there and they were going to leave, and they'd only been there a short time.

You know how it is when you meet someone for the first time who's in God's Church. You have this bond automatically like you've known them all your life. And in just a few sentences, it's like you've known them, and it's a unique bond that God gives through the power of His holy spirit. This is what they experienced in a very powerful way.

Verse 6—When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home. Then when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. On the next day, it says, we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, being of the seven...

So, he was one of the seven made deacons earlier on in the book of Acts as it talks about. He was the one who met with a eunuch later on, the eunuch of Ethiopia, with wealth and so forth and the power that he had at this particular time, had the chariot there, different things that he was on. Anyway, we talked about that occasion where he went up and met with him and “Do you understand what you’re reading” and so forth. He wanted to be baptized then.

Again here, this is where he was living, this is where he was from, Philip was, up in the area of Caesarea. Caesarea isn’t on any map there, but it was an area just south of Lebanon. If you were to look at a map, it’s south of Beirut, just into the areas of Israel, well before you get down to as far as Tel Aviv. It’s north of Tel Aviv maybe about an hour, whatever, sixty miles. It can’t be that far; it’s not that big. But I don’t think it’s quite that far. But anyway, it’s just north of Tel Aviv. Incredible country, so narrow. Fairly long. Not real long, but think, all this time, all the troubles they go through now and all the things they’re experiencing in such a small area, it’s kind of mind-boggling.

Verse 10—Now, as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul’s belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus says the holy spirit... Now, they went through things in the early Church that God has done different. We don’t even know how God has worked in different eras. Those things aren’t recorded.

We don’t know what happened during nearly the thousand years of Thyatira. We don’t have history; we don’t have that history. Or what happened later in Pergamos and so forth, before Thyatira. We just don’t know one era to another what people went through, what they experienced. They’re not recorded because the Church was always scattered, always small, different regions, things happened to it, people moved, went on to other regions. This has been an ongoing thing for two thousand years.

So, here at this point, it’s making it clear this is done by the holy spirit. God was revealing something, giving something, and working through Agabus to say something. And it says, **Thus says the holy spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt.** Pretty straightforward. It’s Paul’s belt. **...and deliver him into the hands of the gentiles.** So, it’s going to be into the hands of the Romans.

Now, when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go to Jerusalem. They didn’t want that to happen. **Then Paul answered, What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart?** So again here, very moving. **For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Joshua.** So, whatever comes, so be it, he said he was ready.

Verse 14—So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. So, after those days, we packed and went to Jerusalem. Also, some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, a common Greek name I guess at that time, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.

Now, when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day, it says, Paul went up into the house of James, and all the elders who were present. It says they were all present there. **Verse 19** goes on with the story then. **When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the gentiles through his ministry.** So, pretty long report. You know, they had a long time to go through this from area to area as he talked about different areas and what was taking place at certain areas and what God had been doing in raising up the gentile Churches. They didn't know all of the things there; they'd heard different things by piecemeal here and there from people who would travel back and forth from different areas.

Then **verse 20** it says, **Now having heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said to him, You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who have believed?** Now, this term here, some translate it as tens of thousands. It's a word that's used in that regard, thousands upon thousands and sometimes tens of thousands it's talking about. So again, we don't know, but it appears as though that indeed there were a lot of people being called in these different regions scattered all over the place.

It says, **how many thousands of Jews there were who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they, it says here, have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the gentiles to forsake Moses.** So, this here is a little hard to really go through in some parts because it doesn't mean that these were necessarily in the Church either. So, I'll be candid with you, I don't know. It very well may be about zealous Jews, how many thousands and thousands there are there in essence.

So, again here, it's kind of unclear the way it's written in the Greek language here, and some of the translations sometimes you really don't know because there's really been a very poor job done in so many places of the Bible when things have been translated.

Again here, they were excited because of the ministry and so forth, and it says they glorified God. And then making this comment how many thousands of Jews there were who have believed, "and they are zealous for the law." It doesn't seem to fit in the sense of the Church fully and how that would be expressed because the law was more a matter of especially some of the Sadducees. They tended to be more for the Torah, if I remember correctly here, or the things that came out as far as the first five books. That's where their primary focus was upon. The Pharisees followed the rest as well. But whether it means those who were a part of that, I can't say for certain, and I don't want to leave the wrong impression here.

It says, "But they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the gentiles to forsake Moses." So obviously here, if that's the case, it appears as though the ones being spoken of

here aren't a part of the Church. Because this wouldn't seemingly be in their minds or they wouldn't do that if they were filled with God's spirit, led by God's spirit as far as the Church is concerned. Although, going back to what I'd said earlier, God was calling thousands, and that was clear from the very beginning, from the very get-go. But again, there's a lot we don't know, so I'm going to leave it up in the air because we can't be dogmatic about it in any fashion or form.

But again here, this is something of their concern that's being said here about Paul, that this is what Paul was doing. This is what they're relating their concern of, which was what some were saying, that they are all zealous of the law, **But they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise children nor to walk according to the customs.**

So again, could be, could not be. I really don't know. This could very well be the Church, and because of what other Jews are saying about it, because this would be a common thing that would take place. This is an area of Judaism, and they're all over the area of Jerusalem. And if you've had a lot of people who have been called in that particular area, there are going to be relatives and different ones who are still in Judaism who are going to try to persuade you and try to talk down about Paul and what he was doing. And so, this warning here to beware because these people are out there would seem to fit into the scenario better. So, again, I don't know.

So, it says, **What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.** So again here, this appears to be the Church, but they also went into the synagogues on a regular basis.

Verse 23—Therefore, do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow upon themselves. Take them and be purified with them. So it begins to become a little clearer in this part of the story; it would definitely appear this is among the Jews and Judaism because this is something they're doing. Not within the Church because the Church isn't going to try to harm Paul, isn't going to do anything of that nature whatsoever. And so, this is why they're doing this. And yet again, on the other hand, if it's to try to help those who are a part of the Church to understand that no, they're not true in what they're saying and because they still had some dealing with this matter of circumcision because this went on for a long time.

Don't know. I hate that. There are some things we have to acknowledge we don't know. So, we have to be able to say we don't know dogmatically. It could be this, or it could be that, but it's an awesome story nevertheless of what Paul had to go through and what they were dealing with.

But concerning the gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing. So, this is very early on. We know about what took place there. They were told that they shouldn't be bothered by this by any fashion or form; it's not required. Paul even taught as time went along here circumcision is of the heart, it's not something to be done physically. It's not required upon

anyone. It took a long time to get used to this in the sense of being able to do it, especially among Jews who had been called.

When you have something in your mind all your life to the degree they did – because they were very far to the right in a lot of these things, some of these were. So, it says here, “But concerning the gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing.” So, they’re going back in history and saying, “This is what we did.” So, you remember the letter that was sent out with Paul and taken to tell them those things, what the apostles had determined there in Jerusalem the first time around.

...except that they should keep themselves from things, again, offered to idols, from blood, and from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. Then Paul, it says here, took all the men the next day, having been purified with them. So, this is a process, again, not required in the Church, but seen by others, seen by Jews. In or out of the Church? Perhaps both. But again, to keep things in a manner that no one become offended he did this.

So, they said we have these four who are going in to be purified, you should go with them, you should be a part of this. So, there was no harm in doing it, although it wasn’t required. And just as he, I believe it was Timothy, who was circumcised, even though there was no need for that still did it.

Again here, then he says, **Paul took them in, and the next day having been purified with them...** So that people can see this, it’s in the open. It’s at, my understanding, at the temple. Yes, it says here **entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification.** So, there are certain times and so forth and they were all familiar with all this. We’re not today. We don’t know all the ins and outs of the process. **...at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.** So again here, very physical thing. It’s not something that the Church would have been doing, people in the Church.

Now, when the seven days should end, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all everywhere against the people, the law, and this place. So again here, obviously not of the Church, the ones doing all these things. But why, again, Paul felt compelled to do this there? Perhaps to keep down the rumors or to dispel them or to help squash, if you will, this kind of thing that was going around within Jerusalem about him?

This man who teaches all everywhere against the people, the law, and this place, which he didn’t but this is how they took it, this is their interpretation. It’s just like those who had Christ killed, their interpretation of the things that were there weren’t true, but that’s the way they saw it through their beliefs. **...and furthermore, he also brought gentiles into the temple and has defiled this holy place.** So again here, from the perspective of the Jews.

(For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) So again, Paul hadn't brought them into the temple as the way the story is going here, but they just take it for granted since they were in company together, which among Jews is wrong to be in company with gentiles if you are a Jew. Quite a confusing place.

And this is around 58 AD, this period of time here, so we've moved along quite a way here. But again, there are things we don't know in some of these stories that are told. Just like the purification. I don't know how that was accomplished. I don't know that anyone in the Church has ever understood how this purification works and all the ins and outs of it and how they practice it. There's not a whole lot in that respect verbatim about it.

Verse 30—Then all the city was stirred up, and the people came running together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple. So again here, obviously Jews. ...and immediately the doors were shut. Because this is who he was doing this in front of, obviously, and again, perhaps trying to dispel some of the rumors.

Now, as they were seeking to kill, I guess to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. Now, when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. So again here, they wanted to go a little farther than that and finish him off. **Then the commander came near and took him and commanded him to be bound in two chains; then he asked who he was and what he had done. Then some among the multitude cried one thing and some another.** So again here, it's very obvious here this is those of the Jews and not anyone of the Church.

So, when he could not ascertain the truth because of the uproar, he commanded him to be taken into the garrison. So, please understand in what I'm saying here that although this was among the Jews, he was in the temple, and he was, as the story seems to conclude here, he was working to dissuade or to squash if you will, put an end to all the rumors that are going around about him and how he acted or believed among them, so that wouldn't stand out as much, so the hatred and the stirring up wouldn't be as great.

Because these things would have had impact on some in the Church as people continued to be called, the change from Judaism to this way was a struggle. It took time. Just like the matter of circumcision. It took time for them to deal with these. Even by this time, I'm sure that there were people who still had battles with those who are being called out of Judaism. Because there were a lot of apostles there in that region who were able to preach and to teach and instruct, and others would have been brought along. And if God was calling them, which it sounds as though they were because of all the ones who were there and all the things they would have been doing with them. And they went on to other regions as well but as a whole, this is where their headquarters was for that period of time.

So again here, also to have a better rapport, if you will, and acceptance by those who were being called in Judaism, it would have been a natural part of the process.

So, when he reached the stairs it says, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the strength of force of the crowd. For the multitude of the people followed him after, crying out, Away with him! They wanted to kill him.

Then, as Paul was about to be led into the garrison, he said to the commander, May I speak to you? So again here, Roman garrison right there in the area. They came out immediately because this uproar was happening all around that particular area, because these are all very central in that respect. Not next to but close to in that vicinity of the temple.

And it says, he asked the commander, **May I speak to you? And he replied, Can you speak Greek? Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion?** This is what he's taking. Here the whole city is stirred up, you must be that Egyptian. He had no idea who Paul was and so forth and he's wanting to know so he can find out why the city is so stirred up and why people are doing what they are doing.

Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness? But Paul said... So, he jumps to a huge conclusion here because this has to be something big for them to be that riled up. And so, you must be. That's his conclusion. It's amazing.

But Paul said, I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no significant city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people. So, when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. So, at least he was under protection, otherwise, they would have killed him for sure. They wanted to kill him anyway. They were beating him, wanting to do more. Here he's going to have the soldiers around him, and the crowd can't do anything if he gives him permission to speak.

Then when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying, [Acts 21:1] Brethren and fathers, henceforth hear my defense. Now, when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept silent all the more. They didn't even know! They had heard some of these rumors, they heard some of these things spread around. Paul went there for the purpose of helping dispel some of that and perhaps make it even better for the Church and so forth but that's not the outcome of what was taking place here.

Then he said, I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel. Now, this was awesome. The kind of teacher that he was, the reputation. Anyway, I'll read some here in a moment about him. **...at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the scriptures of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.**

So again here, according to tradition, I'm just going to read this, but not all absolutely historical fact, because when you go back this far, there are so many things in history have been rewritten. And people who write things, it's kind of like today on Wikipedia, a lot of things get written and you don't know what's true and what isn't and a whole lot of things aren't as far as things that are factual, especially when you get into matters of history and the like. So again, not all historical fact.

"Gamaliel succeeded his father, Simon, and his grandfather, the renown sage Hillel." So, if you've heard some things in Jewish history, that word would stand out, "*Hillel*," because very famous in Judaism as far as the things that they taught and the things that came through them in the priesthood. So, this was the school that Gamaliel had come through, in that respect. "*As nasi*, he was president of the Sanhedrin, which was a supreme Jewish court."

"Gamaliel held a leading position in the Sanhedrin." So again, speaking of Hillel and then Gamaliel. So, they were all familiar with the names because they were at the height and highest in Judaism, if you will. "Gamaliel held a position in the Sanhedrin and enjoyed the highest repute as a teacher of the law. He was the first to be given the title '*rabban*' which means "our master," "our teacher," which is a title higher than rabbi. And according to tradition, Gamaliel's son, Gamaliel II, was a noted *nasi*," as they pronounce it, "of the Sanhedrin, and his grandson was Judah *nasi*." Again, just showing that this continued on for generations and generations, this reputation of Hillel and what came from that.

So, Gamaliel was of that school; they had the great reputation of teaching and so forth. He had a position in the Sanhedrin. So, when all the Jews heard this that were there, they would have been astonished. They would have been in awe, in part. They wouldn't have liked the things he's going to say and they had believed other things that they had been told, but this held them up a little bit at least at the beginning of this to cause them to be silent and to hear and to listen because of the renown of what he was saying here, of those he had been taught by and where they came from and the positions they held.

Again here, he said, **I am indeed a Jew, born of Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you are to this day. I persecuted this way to the death.** So, even more so, "this way," they knew what he was talking about. And again, throughout Acts, it talks about "this way" or "that way" or "the way," and everyone knew what this was in context, what it was talking about, those who followed Christ, those who believed who he was.

...and I persecuted this way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness. So, the high priests were aware of this, of his reputation and what he'd done. They knew who he was. **...and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.**

He's showing here this is the distance he travelled, all the way up toward Damascus in Syria and that region up through there. This is how far his authority went to go to capture these people and bring them back. Amazing, the persecution the Church went through, that it was able to survive in the midst of that kind of an environment.

Verse 6—Now it came to pass, as I journeyed and came to Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven was shining around me. Then I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? So I answered, Who are you, Lord? And he said to me, I am Joshua of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.

Now, those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of him who spoke to me. So I said, What shall I do, Lord? Then the Lord said to me, Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told the things which are appointed for you to do. So again here, pretty strong stuff. And to picture that where the guards are there, the captain of the guard is there, and the people are keeping silent for a time, listening to what he's telling them and considering some of this. Incredible!

And since I could not see because of the power of the light, I was led by the hand of those who were with me to go on to Damascus. Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having witness by all the Jews dwelling there, came to me and stood and said to me, Brother Saul, receive your sight. And at that same time, I looked up at him. And then he said, The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of his mouth. For you will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.

So now, be about it. Not the matter here of "Why do you tarry?" It just says, in essence, "Be on with what you are to do." **Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.** So again, to put yourself in that environment, to think what might be going through different minds of Jewish people and the fact that he was talking in this manner. Don't know if he was expecting them to, believe but he was giving his defense that it be recorded.

Verse 17—Now it came to pass, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and I saw him saying to me, Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning me. So again here, moving on is what it was talking about here, to "get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning me."

So I said, Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe upon you. Then when the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I also was standing by giving consent to his death and guarding the garments of those who were killing him. Then he said to me, Depart, for I will send you far from here to the gentiles.

So they listened to him until this word. So again here, he had the audience, they were listening to him up to this point. He told about how he gave consent to have Stephen killed.

So, they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, Away with such as this from the earth, for he is not fit to live! Then, as they cried out and threw down their clothes and cast dirt into the air, the commander ordered him to be brought into the garrison. You know, you think about the commander. No knowledge of why they were this upset, of why the city was in the uproar that it was, and to see them doing this when they're starting to throw dirt up in the air and act this way, he had to be like, "Why am I here? Crazy people!" I would think that anyway. I don't know about you.

It says he had him brought into the garrison because they were getting so riled up and things were getting heated again, and he didn't want to have something like this happen under his command. That wouldn't be good for him.

...and he said that he should be examined under scourging. So, they're going to beat him to try to find out what he had to say or what was really happening, what was taking place. So, a matter of being beaten here, whipped, **so that he might know why they were shouting so against him.** So, that's their method, the Roman method. There's been a lot through history where people think that by beating the tar out of you that somehow they're going to get the truth out of you. Most of the time, it's used because they want a certain thing out of you. In here it's just that maybe this will encourage them to tell the truth. Like he wasn't telling the truth before this?

So, they bound him with leather straps. Paul said to the centurion who stood by... So again here, here they are, they're taking him in, they're getting ready to scourge him, they bound him up with the leather straps and **Paul said to the centurion who was standing close to him, Is it lawful for you to scourge** (to flog, to whip, if you will) **a man who is Roman, and being punished without being tried?** So he had a lot of tricks in his bag, so to speak. Here was one that got him out of some trouble. Already, he's not going to have to be beaten. Because he knows the response. He knows where he stands, and he hasn't used this. He hasn't even told them.

And when the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, Take heed what you do... Because that would have been against the law, and they all knew that. You can't beat a Roman like this without a trial. Now, others you can, but not a Roman. He said, **for this man is a Roman. Then the commander came and said to him, Tell me, are you a Roman? And he said, Yes. The commander answered, With a large sum, I obtained my citizenship. And Paul said, I was born a citizen.** Powerful. So, he's letting him know, "I didn't buy this. I was born with this."

Verse 29—Then right away those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. So, even in this, he knew that he could be in trouble. If Paul pursued that, he could have been in trouble for what he had done to him.

Then it says, **The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.** So, this isn't over with. Now he's gathering up the Jews in this to have this out, to get it all out, to give him an opportunity now again even more so to speak, but now with the primary leaders of Judaism to be there in presence because he's commanded them that they are to be there.

Then the story goes on from there, and we'll go into that next Sabbath.