

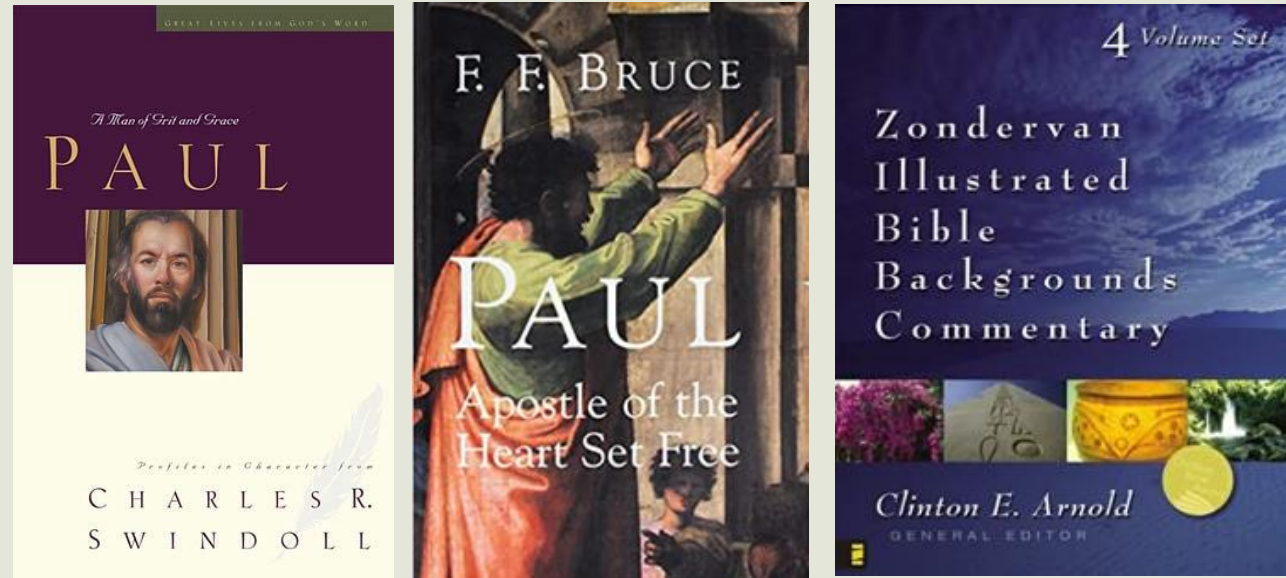


Paul – Lesson 16

New Testament Studies

CBC B&B Sunday School
August 6, 2023

Source Material



Companion Sources

Lesson 16 Intro...

- Acts 21:27 – 23:35 (~ AD 58):
 - Where we last saw Paul, he concluded his third missionary journey, arriving in Jerusalem before the Pentecost – meaning early summer of AD 58.
 - Upon his arrival, he was told that many Jews had spread false information about his teaching, damaging his credibility to lead the Jewish Christians.
 - Church leaders in Jerusalem advised for him to preside over the cleansing ceremony for the Nazarite vow of four men to help repair his credibility among the Jews

Acts 21:27 – 23:35 [NASB]

The Trials of Apostle Paul – Part I:
Responding to Criticisms in Ministry

*Map used by Permission – Standard Bible Atlas



Acts 21:27

Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Acts 21:27 – 23:35 [NASB]

Paul Arrested

Acts 21:27-30 [NASB]

²⁷ When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, *began to stir up all the crowd* and laid hands on him, ²⁸ crying out, “Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” ²⁹ For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. ³⁰ Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut.

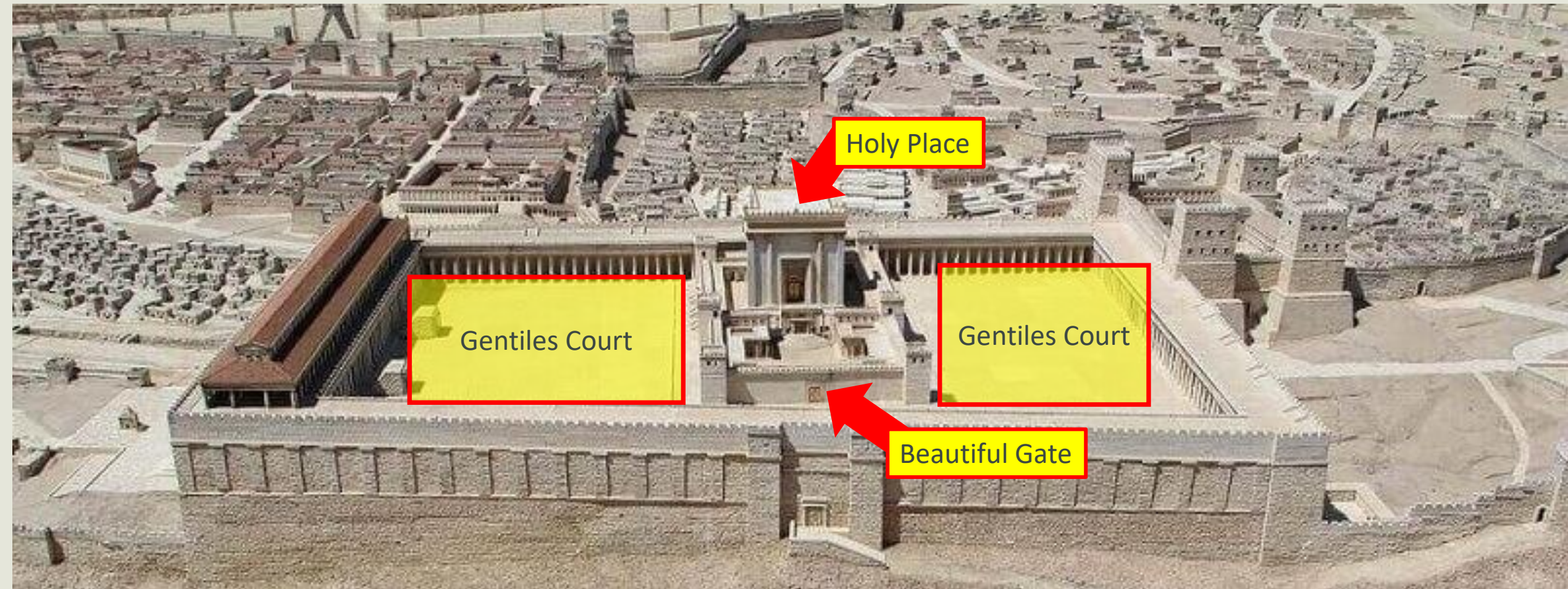
Flashback – Riot in Ephesus

- Acts 19:23-41
 - Temple of Artemis and the worship of the goddess was prominent in the city.
 - Economic impact of people following “the Way” (19:23-27). People stop buying shrines in honor of the goddess Artemis. Paul was blamed. **People did not care about anyone following “the Way” until they felt the economic impact.**
 - Riot ensue in defense of Artemis while simultaneously attacking leaders of “the Way” (19:28-31), followed by attacking and destroying anything for no apparent reason (19:32-34)
 - Riot was calmed by the city clerk who spoke reason and encourage settling matters legally rather than violently (19:35-39) – less being accused of starting a riot in the Roman world, where nobody benefits (19:40-41)

Acts 21:27-30 [NASB]

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Acts 21:31-36 [NASB]

³¹ While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the *Roman* cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. ³² At once he took along *some* soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, **they stopped beating Paul.** ³³ Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and **he *began asking who he was and what he had done.*** ³⁴ But among the crowd some were shouting one thing *and* some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. ³⁵ When he got to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; ³⁶ for the multitude of the people kept following them, shouting, “Away with him!”

Riot in Ephesus / Riot in Jerusalem

■ Acts 19:29-32

- ²⁹ **The city was filled with the confusion**, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. ³⁰ And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him. ³¹ Also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater. ³² So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for **the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together.**

■ Acts 21:33-34

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Acts 21:37-40 [NASB]

³⁷ As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, “May I say something to you?” And he *said, “Do you know Greek? ³⁸ **Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?”** ³⁹ But Paul said, “I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people.” ⁴⁰ When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,

Acts 21:31-36 [NASB]

- Josephus's Account on the False Prophet from Egypt

A greater blow than this was inflicted on the Jews by the Egyptian false prophet. Arriving in the country this man, a fraud who posed as a seer, collected about 30,000 dupes, led them round from the desert to the Mount of Olives, and from there was ready to force an entry into Jerusalem, overwhelm the Roman garrison, and seize supreme power with his fellow-raiders as bodyguard.

Acts 21:31-36 [NASB]

- Josephus's Account on the False Prophet from Egypt

But Felix anticipated his attempt by meeting him with the Roman heavy infantry, the whole population rallying to the defense, so that when the clash occurred, the Egyptian fled with a handful of men and most of his followers were killed or captured; the rest of the mob scattered and stole away to their respective homes

Acts 21:37-40 [NASB]

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Acts 22:1-21 [NASB]

- Paul Defends His Ministry
 - Life Before Christ (22:1-5)
 - Encounter with Christ (22:6-16)
 - Ministry in Christ (22:17-21)

Acts 22:17-21 [NASB]

¹⁷ “It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, ¹⁸ and I saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.’ ¹⁹ And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. ²⁰ And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.’ ²¹ And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

Acts 22:22-30 [NASB]

²² They listened to him up to this statement, and *then* they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!” ²³ And as they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air, ²⁴ the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way. ²⁵ But when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?” ²⁶ When the centurion heard *this*, he went to the commander and told him, saying, “What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman.”

Acts 22:22-30 [NASB]

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Acts 22:22-30 [NASB]

²⁷ The commander came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman?” And he said, “Yes.” ²⁸ The commander answered, “I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money.” And Paul said, “**But I was actually born a citizen.**” ²⁹ Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and **the commander also was afraid** when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains.

³⁰ But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

Anatomy of a Riot

Class Discussion –

How do riots start?

How can we prevent riots?

How do we protect our church from church riots?

Anatomy of a Riot

- People actively involved don't really know why they are actively involved
- People passively caught in the middle struggles to understand what is happening
- There is always a troublemaker(s) with an agenda(s) inciting the riot using falsehoods
- In the middle of a riot, truth is the victim. Troublemaker's goal is to obscure the truth and deny people's right to hear it

Acts 21:27 – 23:35 [NASB]

Paul Before the Sanhedrin

Acts 23:1-11 [NASB]

- Not technically a trial before the Sanhedrin since it is not held inside the Temple and also not preceded nor conducted by various formal trial protocols
- “Trial” was called by the Roman commander; thus, the High Priest lacked authority
- “Trial” was a no-win scenario for Paul – Paul was not going to entertain their motives (23:6)
- Paul’s action was affirmed by God, who told Paul that his next stop will be in Rome (23:11)

Acts 21:27 – 23:35 [NASB]

The Journey to Caesarea

Acts 23:12-22 [NASB]

- Josephus's Account on the Sicarii

Another type of bandit sprang up in Jerusalem, known as 'Sicarii.' These men committed numerous murders in broad daylight and in the middle of the City. Their favorite trick was to mingle with festival crowds, concealing under their garments small daggers with which they stabbed their opponents. When their victims fell, the assassins melted into the indignant crowd, and through their plausibility entirely defied detection. The first to have his throat cut by them was Jonathan the high priest, and after him many were murdered every day. More terrible than the crimes themselves was the fear they aroused, every man hourly expecting death, as in war.

Acts 23:12-35 [NASB]

- Murderous plot conceived to have Paul killed – either by Sicarii or by methods used by Sicarii (23:12-22)
- Governor Felix had his soldiers hunt down these Sicarii assassins virtually every day (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.8.5). Likelihood of this plot succeeding diminishes if Paul was moved to Caesarea – where the Governor's office is.
- Roman commander Lysias deceptively absolves himself of crimes against a Roman citizen, which he had already committed against Paul (23:27-29), then inserts his belief that Paul would be safer in Caesarea (23:30).

Acts 21:27 – 23:35 [NASB]

Analysis

Acts 21:27 – 23:35 [NASB]

- Rioting was without purpose or focus; the Roman commander had a difficult time understanding the rioters' hatred of Paul.
- Responses by the rioting mob to Paul's confession that his ministry is to the Gentiles = Anti-Gentile sentiment was very strong in the City at the time (22:21-22)
- Luke's chronicle on how the crowd was incited into riot by the troublemaking Jews from Ephesus (21:27) who has an agenda, and was willing to achieve that agenda by any means (21:28-29). These same Jews could very well be the ones who incited the crowd again during Paul's testimony (22:22)
- Anti-Gentile sentiment egged on by Jewish leaders in the Sanhedrin – anti-Paul's ministry is aligned with anti-Gentile mentality of the troublemaking Jews.

Acts 21:27 – 23:35 [NASB]

Principles:

Responding to Criticisms in Ministry

Principles I

When mass criticisms are random and without focus, remind ourselves of our calling.

The first principle focuses on our own well-being. **Criticisms without focus are impossible to respond to.** When such criticisms reach a fever pitch, it can often discourage us and derail us from our ministry responsibilities to the point where we would be tempted to simply call it quits. To help himself maintain a level of sanity and focus, Paul simply recounted his salvation experience that led to his calling. This recounting helped him maintain focus for why he does what he does, in spite of all the criticisms – fair or unfair. When we find ourselves in a similar situation, go back and recount our salvation experience unto our calling to help us maintain focus on our Great Commission work. Let our salvation experience and our calling be our encouragement.

Principles II

When mass criticisms are random and without focus, seek truth by observing the reactions.

The second principle focuses on understanding the audience. People will criticize – many times unreasonably; this is a reality. However, when criticisms increase in intensity that is driven by random complaints over seemingly trivial matters (in and of themselves), often times, the audience wouldn't know why they are criticizing – or even rioting. Such is the case here with Paul. As the saying goes – context matters! Especially historical context. In Paul's case, anti-Gentile sentiment was strong, and it may or may not be related to the recent history in the city with a Gentile false prophet. Truth is oftentimes the best cleansing agent. **Note that seeking truth was the goal of the Roman commander, who was tasked with maintaining peace in the City.** Moreover, the Roman commander acted as an objective defendant and protector of Paul, constantly seeking truth in his attempt to bring about peace. When we encounter similar circumstances, seek to model after the Roman commander's actions of pursuing truth while defending the innocent.

Principles III

When mass criticisms are random and without focus, expose the troublemakers.

The final principle focuses on those who sow seeds of division and discord. Luke informs us that the rioting crowd that confronted Paul were spurred upon by troublemakers from out of town that had personal issues with Paul. Using falsehoods and slander, they stirred the crowd in order to achieve their agenda. **Such is the characteristics of troublemakers... they have an agenda, and they would use whatever means – to include falsehoods and slander – to achieve their agenda.** When we find ourselves with a similar situation as Paul, look for the troublemakers and expose them. As Paul discovered, the troublemakers are not interested in giving him a fair hearing. Paul need only to expose them and let God handle the rest. Exposing them will help to get to the truth. This would be a good example to follow.

Questions