

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study

“WHEN FOLLOWING CHRIST GETS COMPLICATED” For individual study or discussion

Hard to believe, but it’s only seven more weeks until Christmas. It won’t be long until we are talking about the birth of Jesus and seeing pictures of the manger, the star, the angels, and the shepherds (along with all the myriad secular images associated with Christmas now). At some point during our Christmas celebrations, we’ll probably think about the wise men, who carried their costly gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the infant King.

Although it’s not mentioned directly by Luke in this passage in Acts, we know from other Scripture (see Acts 24:17, for example), that Paul, like the Magi, brought generous gifts with him. And like the Magi, he had journeyed a considerable distance and endured the hardships of 1st century travel to deliver his gift. Unlike the Magi, however, Paul did not exactly have a triumphal end to his expedition. The Magi bowed down in worship before the infant King and then presented him with their gifts (Matt. 2:11). Paul was received warmly, and no doubt his gift was appreciated, but that was immediately followed by the news that there was major trouble afoot.

- 1) The gift from Gentile Christians in Macedonia and elsewhere was a beautiful expression of the unity of all believers. The Gentile Christians gave generously to their impoverished Jewish brethren in Jerusalem. There apparently, however, were thousands of Jewish believers who felt angry with, not united to, Paul.
 - What do we know about Paul and his adherence to Jewish customs and laws after he became a believer? See Acts 16:3, 18:18, and Acts 15:1-11.
 - At least one commentator has viewed Paul’s agreeing to purify himself and pay the expenses for the four men who had taken a Nazarite vow as a bad decision—a definite mistake—on Paul’s part. The vast majority of commentators don’t see it this way, however. Was Paul contradicting the decision of the Jerusalem Council in participating in these purification rites? Explain your answer.
 - What did his gesture of love to the Jewish Christians accomplish or make possible?
- 2) Read Colossian 3:12-17. The verse before this set of instructions to the Colossian believers reminds them that “Christ is all, and in all.” Therefore there is “no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free.”
 - Must Christians strive to be exactly the same in all of their customs and traditions? Why or why not?
 - If you haven’t done so recently, take a look at the questions in the Westminster Larger Catechism that describe the “duties” required by the 5th through 10th commandments—the ones that tell us how we should live with all humanity and especially our neighbors. How might we apply the catechism answers and all that we have learned in this study to our own interactions with others?



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

DATE: November 8, 2020

SPEAKER: Chad/Frank

SERIES: Acts

PASSAGE: Acts 21:17-26

Family Dinner Table

Anyone at your house ever said the words, “That’s not fair!” Actually, unless your household was put together in the last 30 minutes or so, it’s a safe guess that someone (everyone?) has said or thought those words in your house recently.

When we say that something is not fair, we often mean, “That’s just not right.” We think we *shouldn’t have* to do what we’re being asked to do, or that we *should get* to do or have what we want.

When James asked Paul to meet the requirements of some Jewish laws, Paul could easily have thought, “Wait a minute! I’ve been so generous to these people (brought them a cash gift and everything). And now you’re asking me to do something that I don’t believe is really necessary *and* is going to cost me a lot of money. That’s so not right.”

Of course, that’s not what Paul said. He agreed to everything that James suggested he do (see v. 26). And Paul didn’t “share” (there was no agreement to split the costs) or “compromise” (as in, you get your way some of the time, and I get my way some of the time). Can you think of some situations where you could show love to others the way Paul did?

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Child Evangelism Fellowship

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Susan and Bruce Young, recently retired missionaries