

Return to Jerusalem

By Paris Reidhead*

I want you to turn, if you will please, to Acts, Chapter 21, and I shall begin reading with... well we will just arbitrarily begin with the 17th verse:

“And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. 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: 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. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that 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. 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. 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 everyone of them. 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, 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. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him. And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? And Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue”(Act. 21:17-40).

Now this is a tremendously significant Scripture. One similar to what we saw last week. On the surface, on the outside it appears to be just a relating of events which would seem to have no real relevance to your life in this complicated and difficult 20th century. And yet I think there are many striking things in it which apply to you and to me, and if we are to complete our course with joy we had best learn from the Apostle. We ought to learn everywhere, but if it is inspired teaching, given to us by the Spirit of God, how much more diligent we ought to be to apply it to our hearts.

The first thing you will know is that Paul is among friends wherever he went, because he loved Christ and because he had a testimony for the Lord Jesus he discovered that there was not a singled place that he could go but what there were those that were his because he was Christ's. And how wonderful it is to know that this is the case. How marvelous is to realize that almost anywhere on the face of this old earth that God would in His sovereignty put you, there is someone that is there before you that will receive you in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Even in the lands which are apparently devoid of the Gospel, how strange and wonderful it is to find that someone is there, be he a military servant of his government, or someone trading, someone that has gone for educational work, or one of the residents of the community that God in sovereign grace has brought to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

This ought to encourage your heart. Sometimes you seem so very much alone, in your office, in your shop, in your factory, wherever it is that you happen to labor, or live, or work. You are going to say, I, only I remain. But this is not the case at all. God has a great company of the faithful. Someone was telling me tonight that just in moving from one floor to another in the residence they occupy, they found that the one in charge of the particular floor loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and a fellowship to which there had been no previous contact. How marvelous it is to realize that this is the case.

And when Paul came to any of the cities, there were disciples there that received him in the name of the Lord Jesus. But remember that the reason there are disciples there to receive Paul when he comes is because either he or someone before him had witnessed to them. Your fellowship in the Body of Christ is going to be almost in direct proportion to your loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ, your love for Him, and your desire to witness to others concerning Him. That person that clings to the edge of the Christian community, and wants to share in such blessings as it has, but does not want to accept responsibility will find that it is quite a lonely thing there and elsewhere. But the one who is prepared to actually enter into the life of witness and service can be assured there will always be fellowship. There will always be those, who will gladly receive them in the Name of the Lord. You do not know where in the course of your life you may finally go. How often our plans are changed by God in His wisdom, and His power, and His authority, but you can be sure of this, when you get wherever it is you are going that if you are prepared to find your company there will be some of your company there to be found by you. Maybe some of you are graduating from school; you are saying you are going to go into an entirely new community. This often affords license to escape from the fellowship that has been found restrictive or undesirable, and many times when a student leaves home and goes to the university he will write back after a few months and say, Well, Mother, Father, I know this is going to break your heart, but I want you to know that here at the university I do not find any Christians, and furthermore as I listen to my professors I have been convinced that the Bible isn't true, and all the things of my faith are not true; and I want you to know when I come back I am not going to be the same boy that left. I am giving up my faith. I have just felt that I was intellectually necessary for me to do it.

Oh, that reads good, and it sounds good, and you know there just isn't a grain of truth in it. First thing, there were Christians at that University. I do not know where it was. Oh, I suppose there might have been some exception made in Cairo, but other than that I am sure that there would be in almost any University you would go you would find some Christians, and I wouldn't be surprised but what you would find one or two there for that matter. But, the idea that anyone has been persuaded by his environment that the Gospel isn't so, and Jesus Christ is not what he says he is, or the Bible the Book it claims to be. People do not make that decision because of the weight of evidence; you know that, don't you. Now don't be misled by that. The reason why people give up their faith is not because the evidence is so conclusive that to remain honest they must, but you see their conduct is so licentious that they have got to get a philosophy to fit them, or else they are going to be living in open conflict with their own conduct. And so the reason why people throw over their faith is not because of loneliness, or not because of argument but because they simply want to rationalize the things they are determined to do. And they want to fit their philosophy to their conduct. There just isn't that much evidence.

So this is the one reason why we are so greatly concerned in dealing with young people in the home and in the church, that they should not simply have an easy believism and relationship where they have said yes to several questions to escape being bothered by their parents and the people in the church. We want to see them related to Christ so that when they get out into alien and difficult circumstances they will seek those of their own company, and they will be able to stand against the wave and the pressure, and the current.

Now when he came to Jerusalem, the brethren received him gladly. And whatever it may be that God brings you can expect the same thing.

But you will notice something else. Whenever you come to others there are always some to whom it is appropriate that you should give your testimony. This is why I believe that it is necessary for church life to have such a principle of shared testimony as the... as the means of accepting responsibility in a group. It is the testimony that is given, it is the recognition that is given to the fact that when he came there God already had a ministry and he was part of it.

So we find that there was not only fellowship, but there was also a recognition of responsibility. The day following, Paul went in with us unto James, all the elders were present. He recognized, did the Apostle Paul, that he was part of a larger body. He did not simply stay with the people that he loved and loved him, but he realized that God had established local government for the sake of local strength, spiritual government, and elders. And so he recognized that God was doing something there before he came, and he was responsible to identify with what the Lord was doing. And he therefore related particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. They knew him, he had known them, but still they were concerned to know the Lord's working; and he felt the privilege and responsibility of sharing.

Now I believe that this is so appropriate that missionaries, for instance, that we send to the field should return to their church, their local church, and there should be a very close tie between the church and the missionary. But it ought not to be in just this formal and professional sense. In a sense every day you go to the office you are responsible to the church. Did you know that? Every day you go for your recreation you are responsible to the church. If you are part of the church locally, and it is God's purpose for it, and if you will accept the fact that there is a fellowship of which you are a part, and accept the responsibility of that fellowship you are going to receive three things:

First, **you are going to receive prayer in the task to which you go day by day.** Paul had asked for prayers, he had written for prayers, he sought the people to pray for him.

Secondly, **you are going to receive protection from yourself and from others.** No one is so wise that he does not need the counsel of his fellows. And it is so frequently that we get a good idea, and my it is the most wonderful idea that has ever been had by anyone. But you know, it deserves, if it is that good an idea, to be tested by the people who have not been exposed to it. I have had many good ideas that when someone was there who had not had the same enthusiasm that I had could show me a lot of air holes and flaws in it that I had not seen. Now if your ideas won't stand up to the honest criticism of your fellows that love you then you had better not cross that bridge and get over the torrent until you have tested the idea. It seems to me extremely important that we should seek protection from our own enthusiasm, and we should seek fellowship. Paul had sought counsel from the elders, he had sought fellowship with the elders, he had sought to be part of this group, and this was an extremely valuable part of this ministry.

Then the other thing is this, that you will receive not only prayer support and protection from yourself, but by being in close fellowship with the body of believers wherever you may go, **you are going to have protection to some degree at least from others.** It is so encouraging to us when someone comes, transferring their membership, to have a letter from the church or fellowship that they have left, saying, So and so has been here, labored with us, carried part and parcel of the responsibility, and the privilege. I believe that this is valuable. I think it is tremendously valuable to be protected by the party or members of a body. However skillful my right finger may be, it is not very mind you, it is much happier I am sure residing in the rest of my hand. There is a degree of protection and strength in fellowship. The individual member as valuable as he is in the plan of God must be submerged in his relationship to the Head, and to the members of the body. How many things would have spared the church of God if people had had this same view of the life of the Body as Paul has as we see it here.

But you will notice something else in this, as he relates what has transpired, and what has been accomplished he gives all the glory to God. He declared particularly what things God had wrought by his ministry. But the emphasis is, God had wrought. And if you will recognize this, that it is God who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, then when you relate, and relate you must for the encouraging of others and for the Glory of God, you will have it perfectly clear that it is what God hath wrought.

Now there is a strange and wonderful thing here. When the Spirit of God is describing what Peter did, He says, The miracles that Peter performed. But when Peter is describing, he says, Do you think that we have done this by our power? No. It is by His Name, through faith in His Name. You see we are laborers together with God, and in a sense you are as indispensable to God as God is to you. And that may sound irreverent. I do not mean you so to take it. You see, it is important to God that He has you in that job where you are working. You are the bulb there, tied to Him, and by His presence in you, that corner can become incandescent. And if there is no bulb and cord, then there will be just darkness there. So it is very important to the Lord that

you be there. You are not there primarily there for the living you are earning. Oh, that is of course essential, and undoubtedly God intends to keep it that way so that you will have ever to stay there. But that is not the primary purpose of your being there. It is that you should be the witness for Christ in that situation.

So what is done there is not going to be done only by the Lord. I remember years ago hearing something that has in it a lot of irony, but at the same time a lot of truth. A Pastor, speaker, went to visit a man who had taken a very rough piece of ground, cleared the timber, hauled the stones, built the buildings and farmed the land, and had truly a garden spot. And everything that the Pastor saw, he said, My, look what the Lord has done. Look what the Lord has done. And after a little while this farmer that remembered back breaking toil, picking up those stones, and cutting those trees, couldn't stand it any longer, and he said, Well it is all right. It is true, it is what the Lord has done. But there is just one thing. You should have seen it when He had it alone. And it is important that you should recognize that we are laborers together with God, and that you are important to the Lord. That the difference in that situation where you live is you. You are the key.

Paul was the key. It was when Paul came into the city that the testimony was established. It is when he came that the school was opened. It was when he was there that the testimony proceeded. It all depended upon Paul. Did it? Well in one sense it did. Just as it all depends upon you, in one sense. But as Paul relates it, he says, You know, it is what the Lord has wrought. After all, it wasn't me, it was the Lord. And this is the wonderful fellowship into which He brings you. You are as important to the Lord in one sense as He is to you. He said, You go, and lo I am with you. But you see, there is so much depends upon your going, or as one has put it, Unless you obey the go you can't experience the Lo. And it is so important that you should recognize that that situation into which you go tomorrow is filled with marvelous opportunity for the eternal glory of Christ. Your attitude can change it. If you come in, surly and resentful against your work, or your employer, if you come in with an idea to see how little you can do, and how quickly you can get it done, be sure of this that there is going to be very little testimony for Christ, or opportunity to testify for Christ. Thus He said, Whatever your hands find to do, do with all your might, because in so doing you are witnessing and you are preparing the way to say something.

We have heard it said as a calumny against the church, perhaps far more truth than we are prepared to admit, what you are thunders so loudly we cannot hear what you say. So glad we are and ought to be that God has forever eliminated, and removed the distinction between the secular and the sacred. There is no longer any such line, for He said that Whatever you do in word or deed, do all on account of the reputation of Christ. Therefore, every situation is one just filled, brim full of opportunity for Christ. And you are going to earn the right to speak by listening, by your understanding, by your sympathy, by the fruit of the Spirit in your life, and then a word fitly spoken is like an apple of gold in a picture of silver. How wonderful it is then to know that God will work, He will work because of what you have said, because of your kindness. And someone will come to know the Lord Jesus, and He will say about it, You know this is who so and so led to the Lord, and you will say, This is the one whom the Lord brought to Himself, because you want to give all the glory to Christ. You just leave it up to Him.

But you will notice the wisdom of the church. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. They didn't say, Look what a fine boy Paul is. They didn't commend him. They didn't advertise him, World's greatest preacher is to be seen on the auditorium here in Jerusalem. No. No. No. They said, there is going to be a crowd come, Paul. But they are going to want to just tear your head right off your hair... the hair right off your head, excuse me. The other way around. No, I think I was right the first time. That was what they were really trying to do. But the idea was they glorified the Lord. Just look at them and say, Isn't it wonderful that He could take him, just that mean old Paul, and look what He has done. Isn't that the way you want it. Don't you want it to be, what a wonderful thing the Lord had done with so little, just so little.

I remember when the preacher came...over in England, came to D. L. Moody¹, a man who was skilled, and wise and trained, and said, You know, Mr. Moody, I don't see why you preach. You don't understand grammar. You don't pronounce words properly. You just... you just can't preach. He said, You have mastered grammar? Yes. You have mastered diction? Yes, I have done studies for many years. And you know homiletics? He said, Yes. He said, And I just am sure that the Lord is using you to

¹ Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) An American evangelist and publisher who founded Moody Church

point more to Christ than He is me. And the man said, No, I do not really feel that is the case. Well he said, Maybe the difference is this. I don't know that I don't have anything, and everything has to come from Christ, and you know you do have something and you don't need Him as badly.

Well I wonder if that isn't the attitude that ought to characterize all of us. I just don't have anything, and what is done the Lord is going to have to do. Because the moment that you feel you do have it, then you are probably going to depend upon what you have. And so Paul could say when he was writing, I came unto you not in the wisdom of men's speech, or in the excellency of men's speech. I did not want your faith to stand in the wisdom of men. And I didn't come to you with logical argument and philosophical dissertation, I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified that the excellency and the power might be of God.

Oh his wisdom of course was manifest, but it was Christ's wisdom using what Paul had to give Him, what he brought to the Lord. And so it was quite true that they could glorify the Lord, they could glorify the Lord. May this be true of us. May it be our constant attitude, that we will see no man save Jesus only.

Now he had to relate it, I am sure, in the first person because it had happened in the first person, but it was so obvious that his heart was so absolutely right toward God in all of this that God could trust him. Have you ever thought of this? Have you ever thought of this? I will never forget when I first saw my heart in this regard. Ray Logan worked in the same restaurant I did in Minneapolis, in the summer of 1936. It was a little sandwich shop and we sold malted milks on the street for a nickel. Can you imagine buying anything on the street for the nickel? It tells you how long ago it was. And it was hard work. And Ray worked there and I worked there, and I wanted to see Ray come to know the Lord so one evening when we got off, we worked the early shift, we went out and had a little supper, and we went to Loring Park, and sat down. He had wanted to talk with me about Christ. And I began to explain to him who the Lord Jesus was, and the prophecies concerning Christ, how wonderful Christ was, and he seemed to be interested. But you know, somewhere along the line something happened, and I got derailed, just derailed that is all; because I was wanting Ray to accept Christ that night so that the next Monday in Report Chapel in Bible School I could stand up for once and tell about somebody that I had led to the Lord. I forced him, I pressed him, and finally he bowed his head and muttered something that I put in his mouth, and the next Monday I got up in Chapel, and tried... But you know as I look back on it, even in the midst of saying it there was a revelation of gravel between my teeth. It didn't taste good. I was using Ray for my own advancement in the eyes of my fellows. Oh, how evil this is to make merchandise out of men, to offer them on the altar of our ambitions, to flatter our vanity. No. No. This is wrong, this is wrong, God couldn't trust me. And I determined then and through the years since only God would know. I wouldn't tell unless it would be an illustration of a person for a principle, but the results in numbers just have to stay there, because I couldn't trust my own heart.

Paul knew himself, and so he comes, and he is relating, but what he says is so perfectly related to the compassion of his life, that when they hear it they do not say, My what a wonderful preacher Paul is. They say what a wonderful Lord Jesus is. This is the way I want my life to be lived, and I am sure you do the same. And they glorified the Lord, they glorified the Lord, through your life. See to it then, if you want to have Him glorified by your life then you have got to live with an eye single to His glory, and the great concern of your heart is not, How is this going to affect me, but how is this going to affect Him. I don't want to make you oversensitive about the matter, just right. Just right. It doesn't count about you. The only thing we are concerned about is Christ, that He be glorified in your life. So if you will see this, and recognize this as a principle, then you are going to be forewarned and protected in the days to come. An eye single to His glory.

But we not only learn what is right, but we also learn from the Word of God. What is wrong? And from here on to the end of the Chapter we are learning a lesson from what is wrong. Do you know what it is? Well, would like to take a great deal more time than I intend to in regard to this, but here you have a case where these dear men at Jerusalem, the elders who loved the Lord Jesus Christ devotedly, with all their hearts, couldn't love Him more... Now there is no question about this. Don't let your mind be troubled about their love for Christ, but you know something, It is one thing to love Christ with all your heart, and it is another thing to have all the wisdom that He is prepared to give. And this is not a question of love. This is a question of wisdom. Now there is a problem. There are a great many Jews that have been converted through Peter's ministry and through Paul's, a great many Jews have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. And they have heard that Paul is going around saying, The

Jews are not to be circumcised, they are not to keep the customs, and attend the Temple, and they were going to make trouble when Paul came. Now they are believers too, but they just want to set this fellow, Paul, straight. In Acts, I think there were four of them that had taken a vow among themselves that they were going to see to it that Paul had a good course in theology, and I think this is the vow. They are not the ones who were going to kill him. These were just the ones who were going to set him up, set him straight, and get him cleared up in this thing, and they apparently had taken a vow before the Lord that they were going to see to it that Paul got straightened out as soon as he got to Jerusalem.

Well these men, these dear elders thought it over, and they didn't say, Now what is for the glory of Christ in this? They said, How can we keep peace in the family. Now what they were prepared to recognize in Paul as a governing principle they weren't prepared to recognize in themselves. And it was not a question, Is this right? The question in their mind was, Will it keep peace? And so they said, Now Paul, there is going to be trouble here, there is going to be argument, and there is going to be debate. There are going to be problems. Won't you go to these four men who are so determined to straighten you out and tell them that they do not need to worry, and you go with them to the temple and you submit to the ceremonial cleansing and then they can shave their heads saying the vow has been kept, and they can go back. Now Paul, we do not ask the Gentiles to do this, but after all you have been a Pharisee, and you have been reared in the tradition of the Jews, won't you do that. And Paul had taken Timothy to be circumcised, said, Well, yes. The counsel of the brethren wish me to; I am prepared to do it. And here is a man that went all through every step, from Ephesus all the way across, every place he went, the Spirit of God signified to him saying that there would be trouble, there would be difficulty, there would be problems, didn't see where the trouble and difficulty and problems were coming from, didn't realize it.

Now what he should have done, I am sure, is said, Now let us face this issue honestly and fairly. These things are not important to either Jew or Gentile, and we might just as well get the atmosphere clear. But no, it seemed wiser that he should compromise. There is always a place when it seems as though it won't do too much harm to compromise, and this was the place. Paul looked at it and he said, It doesn't look to me as though this is going to do too much harm. But it did. It did. There was an issue here. There was an issue on which he should stand, there was a place where he ought to have lovingly have said, No, Brethren, and he might have very well have persuaded them. He certainly persuaded Peter, on the occasion when he withstood him to his face; he might have changed the whole course, if with that heart that loved Christ with such devotion and sincerity and intelligence he had brought all that the Lord could have brought, he could have been the instrument of correcting the church in this tendency to compromise with Judaism. For this had been a problem in the church and became increasingly a problem after this. And here was an opportunity to lovingly, not belligerently, but just lovingly to have stood and said, I can't compromise.

Now dear friend, if you have a desire to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in your generation, ask God to give you the wisdom to know when to give ground and when to stand. I suppose the 325 sects in America, the denominations and groups for the most part, certainly not all of them because some of them have had a spontaneous life, and they are not sects at all in that sense, but I suppose most of them have come because people did not know the difference between what should be conviction and what should be an opinion. Do you know the difference? In your opinions there ought to be a little latitude. You can hold something to be an opinion, but when you elevate an opinion to the rank of a conviction and you die for an opinion as you would for a conviction, you have the makings of a first-class rumpus. There is going to be difficulty. But if you can distinguish between your opinions and your convictions, and die for your convictions, and appreciate and hold your opinions, then you are going to be of great service to the cause of Christ. It seems to me imperative, therefore, that Paul should have seen the essence of a conviction here, that he could not, knowing what he knew, and ministering to those God had sent him have given grounds on this point. But he did; in his desire to be guided he submitted. But isn't it strange when Agabus came and took his sash and tied his hands and feet, the Apostle didn't waver. He said, I must go even to death. And he is not trying to protect himself. I think he is interested in the feelings of his brethren.

My dear friend, ask God to give me wisdom so that you will know the place, the place where you must stand, and the grounds on which you must stand. Because if you pass that place, sometimes it is just a little too far to retract. You cannot go back over it. Ask God to give you wisdom. If Paul had sought that wisdom it might have been quite different.

And now the perils. Not only is the place for compromise incipient and dangerous, but there are great dangers, great peril in compromise, as there is manifested here. It didn't solve the problem, because they avoided the issue. The problem continued, it escaped, it squeezed right through the situation, and bloomed, and blossomed and enlarged out beyond it. So the peril of all compromise is that you simply postpone the time, and the time might have been more propitious. You know it is much easier to pull the weed out when it is just breaking the ground than it is when it has become a huge thing in the garden that corrupts the whole intent of the garden.

We have seen, you have seen of course, little weed trees growing up in a neglected field, a fallow field. There is a little maple tree growing up, there is just a little sprig of an apple tree, there's an ash, or there is an oak. Why you go along with one hand and pull up the ash, pull up the oak, pull up the maple, and hold a dozen of them in your fist. They are just little things but if you leave that you know what is going to happen? You come back next year you'll have to take a shovel to get it out. You leave it for three years, and you know you have got a major job because it has deepened, it has thrown its roots down, and it has enlarged. It is going to be so much harder to deal with it later on. And this is what the history tells us, the peril of compromise is that you postpone the time of dealing with the issue until it is far more difficult to deal with than it was before.

Secondly, the other aspect of peril is this, that you actually play into the hands of the out and out enemies of the Gospel who will use this as a means, or an excuse that had you stood on the issue would not have afforded them that opportunity. See this then, see it and understand it, that there are enemies of your soul that are just looking, just looking. I remember reading just recently a treatise by an evangelical pastor who said, You know, I think it is very important that anyone who wants to witness to the unsaved be quite willing to go into the bar and take the cocktail and take anything that is offered and to show that he is a good fellow, and disarm his friends, people, so that he can talk to them about Christ. Well this compromise of course is going to be misunderstood, as someone has said just today, Very likely the people that will see him there aren't going to be as keenly or mentally alert as he is, and they are going to utterly and completely misunderstand what he has done. No. I do not believe that for so much as a moment that a compromise here is justified. I have never seen it to work, I have never seen it to have profit. If you want to have a ministry for Christ, as soon as the issue arises there stand. There stand. Don't postpone it till some other day. Right at that point of beginning is the point to deal with it. If you will deal with the leprous spot on the man who gives one little white spot on his cheek to which the needle can get no response; it is leprosy all right, but it is far easier to deal with that, and the possibility of cure is far greater than one comes with their hands eaten away by the foul disease. It is much better to deal with it at the point of discovery, because you play right into the hands of enemies who will capitalize on it to injure you and others.

So this is what has happened. Instead of standing on his convictions at this point, the apostle bent with it, and went along with it, and he put himself in the place that he could be taken by the out and out enemies of the Gospel. He wouldn't have been anywhere in the situation. He wouldn't have been there at all, had he stood where he had preached in Galatians on this ground that there was no relationship between the Gospel and Judaism.

So we are warned, we are warned. We are warned that there is a place. There is going to come a place. I will even be bolder and say, Between now and next Lord's Day you are going to face an issue where you will have every temptation to compromise, either by your silence unwarrantedly held, by words unwisely spoken, or by actions improperly given. And if you are aware of this, and know it, and at that very point you just say that in your heart that firm, NO, no to the will of man, yes to the will of God, you are going to be warned. Paul now is in chains, he is in bondage, he is captured, he is held, and from now he is towed through the rest of the Book. He doesn't walk through; He is pulled through it. You say, Well isn't this the will of God? Well certainly it is the permissive will of God, but I am going to take 10 thousand years out before lunch when I get to Heaven and ask God if He didn't have something better for Paul than we have here in these last chapters of Acts. I am going to talk it over, because my own personal feeling is that we cannot ascribe infallibility to Paul, any more than we can to Peter, and that this was just not what should have been done by him or by you. And we can learn just as David, a man after God's own heart, a friend of God, one whom God delighted to honor, and to whom great promises were given and prophecies were made, David sinned, and you can tell that the Bible is an inspired Book because one of the heroes of a large segment of it has his sin exposed on its pages, and God isn't going to cover a brook for anybody. And so it is I believe that right here you see the peril of

compromise, and you see the responsibility of standing for the right as you see the right at the moment that the issue arises, and it is going to save you.

Someone has said, It is so terribly hard to lie. You have to have such a good memory. You have to remember what you said to so and so, and so and so, and not get them mixed. It is just so much easier. Lazy people will love to tell the truth, because it doesn't tax their memories. They can just relax, and say the thing, because it is what is so. But I suppose the mentally ambitious and vigorous will find that lying is sort of an exercise because it does test their metal as to whether they can remember what they have said.

Compromise is the same kind of thing. Jumping across the raging torrent on floating logs. I have watched these lumber jacks in Minnesota as they brought the logs down the river, and had no desire whatever to enter their profession. This is one profession that I shall never challenge. If they have a union list I will never seek to get on it. Riding the logs down a torrent in the spring. Now there is just something about it that ceases to be adventure and becomes folly, and so it is try to go across the river of time on the spinning logs of compromise is just too difficult; you just can't do it.

And this is where we find that the elders were misguided, proving that they are not always infallible; the apostle was misguided. But you know the wonderful part of it is that even there God still knows that it was a matter of the head and not of the heart, and so He makes it fall out for the furtherance of the Gospel. And so if you look back and say, I have compromised, don't throw up your hands in despair, don't quit. Just right now in your heart of hearts say, I am going to stand. From today on, as long as I live I am going to stand, just stand, stand, and God will be pleased in His great love to overcome the past, restore the years the locusts have eaten. But if you have compromised, dear heart, you ought to look back and see the scars that it has left, and so be reminded not to do it again, to stand, just to stand, in love, and stand in patience, and stand in faithfulness; and if you have any question as to the wisdom of compromise, listen to the chains that clank. For he is in two chains as Paul makes his way up the castle steps.

Be you a Paul or a David, there is just no place for compromise. You have got to stand, stand, stand. Well that is the message, the Word. The Lord Jesus Christ loved us, He gave Himself for us. It would have been much more comfortable if He had taken us to heaven as soon as we were saved. But He wouldn't have gotten out of us what He wanted, nor would we have gotten out of Him what we needed. So He has left us here, and He has given us warnings on every hand. He has given us provisions, adequate to meet every need, and He has given us every incentive to just go on step by step with Him in faithfulness.

Shall we bow our hearts together in prayer. We thank Thee, our Father, for the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee that He loved us, that He shed His Blood for us. If there should be one, just one among us who does not know forgiveness, and know peace, and know the joy of the Lord at sins forgiven, might this be the night when the heart's door is open, Christ is invited in. Oh, that there might be someone that could say tonight, "Just as I am without one plea but that Thy Blood was shed for me, and that Thou bid'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God I come."² For such there is life. And our Father, for the most part, a company of believers that are going into tomorrow, are going into student situations, as employees, and heads of business, great responsibilities to all of us; and yet Father, we need to be warned, we need to be encouraged we need to remember that we are part of a Body, we need to remember that we need each other. But we need to remember, Father, that even in every situation we have got to come back to the absolute standard, the traditions of the church, and the teaching of the elders can never replace the clear Word of God, and so Father, as we have seen this tonight, the danger of compromise, the possibility of it, the perils that are in it, might our hearts be fixed, might there come to every one of us a purpose to stand, and having done all to stand, stand on the truth, and stand on the Word, and stand on the grounds of the finished work of Christ that we not move into this quicksand, this morass of trying to please everybody, and be everything to everybody; but we just patiently, and lovingly, and courageously stand for the glory of Christ. We do not want to come into chains, Father. Give us wisdom that we may stand wisely. Especially the young people in School. How easy it is to just bend a little here and break a little there, and so to become involved. Grant that there may come a heart purpose to stand for the glory of Jesus Christ. In His Name and for His sake we pray.

² "Just as I Am, Without One Plea" Music: William B. Bradbury, 1816-1868; Words Charlotte Elliott, 1789-1871.

With our heads still bowed, perhaps I speak to some or several that have compromised. You know the areas. You know what you should have done. Do you know how to deal with it? You must deal with it as sin. You must confess it as sin. You must forsake it as sin, and then you can know the cleansing of the precious Blood, and restoration to full fellowship again. So do not go with compromise in your life, undealt with. And if you would like help or counsel, you speak to us. We are here just for you. Let us stand for the Benediction.

“Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and honor, dominion and majesty, now and forever. Amen” (Jud. 1:24-25).

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, May 5, 1963 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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