



09/15/2019
21:17-36;
1 Corinthians 9:19-27

BIG IDEA

Become all things to all men for the chance that God might win some.

LOOKING BACK

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Invite members to share any questions or points that came up in their family discussions regarding last week's study. Invite them to share ways God continued to speak to them as they sought to apply those truths throughout the week.

- Have you ever sacrificed your goals and priorities to help someone else? What was that like?
- What is a conviction, goal, or priority you would never sacrifice for anyone or for any reason?

Sometimes we have convictions we must be willing to sacrifice for the sake of a greater priority. After his encounter with Jesus, Paul completely reoriented his life with one goal: Share the gospel of Jesus Christ with as many people as possible. To do this, he sacrificed certain things, even personal convictions at times, in order to share the life he had found in Jesus.

LOOKING IN

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| **Ask a volunteer to read Act 21:17-36.**

- If the believers in Jerusalem were truly supportive of Paul's ministry and glorifying God over the salvation of Gentiles (20), was it right for them to expect him to attempt to please those who were not similarly supportive (20-22)? Explain.

Paul was zealous for grace in Jesus Christ and was convicted that the Jewish customs were unnecessary requirements for salvation. The Jews in Jerusalem were zealous for the law.

- How can we determine when there is a greater priority than our "rightness"?
- What are some examples of convictions we might need to sacrifice in order to reach unchurched people (ex. certain elements of a worship service)?
- After all was said and done (36), do you think Paul would say his sacrifice was worth it? Why or why not?

Nowhere in Scripture are believers promised a suffering-free life. In fact, we are promised the opposite, “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. The good news, however, for Christians is that God has a design for their suffering. Romans 8:28 reminds us that God works all things, including our suffering, together for our good. First Peter 1:7 reminds us that God intends suffering to refine our faith and make us more like Jesus.

| *Ask a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 9:19-27.*

- What is your initial reaction to the idea of making yourself “a slave to everyone” (19)?
- What does it look like to be “all things to all people”? What does it not look like?
- Verse 23 refers to the blessings of the gospel. What are some of these blessings?

Paul always took the time to understand his audience. Though he never watered down the central message of the gospel, his ministry included numerous times when he gladly made social and personal accommodations to reach others. Paul made every effort to understand those he told about Jesus. Paul used the world against the world so that he could connect people with Christ.

- In what situation or relationship does Paul’s analogy in verses 24-27 challenge or encourage you right now?

Like an athlete in training, Paul disciplined himself with a purpose—winning others to Christ. Paul frequently employed athletic metaphors to describe the rigors and focus required of the practice of self-discipline. He wanted all other desires in his life to be subject to his calling to lead people to Christ. If we want to consistently experience the blessings of the gospel, specifically in the area of bringing others to Jesus, we must focus on spiritual discipline.

LOOKING FORWARD

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- What would need to change in your life for you to truly say, “I become all things to all men for the chance that God might win some”?
- In this week’s message, we were reminded that misunderstandings are going to happen, and that how we respond is up to us. Are there any situations or relationships where you’ve prioritized something other than following the path of Jesus? How do today’s passages speak to you about that?
- How would you describe your passion for seeing people come to faith in Jesus? What are some steps we can take to increase that passion?

FAMILIES

Use the following questions and truths to disciple your children throughout the week.

- What is something you have that someone else might need? Would it be hard for you to give it to them? Why or why not?

Point out that we do have something other people need—the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

- What are some things you could sacrifice to have an opportunity to share Jesus with others? (Ex. sitting by your best friend at lunch, etc.)

PRAY

Thank Jesus for sacrificing His very life on the cross for our sins so that we could have eternal life. Ask Him to help you devote yourselves to His priorities and obeying Him no matter the personal consequences.

COMMENTARY**| Acts 21:1-40**

21:1 The shipboard journey continued from Ephesus by way of Cos to Rhodes and Patara. This is the third “we” section in Acts. It extends through 21:18.

21:3 The most common vessels sailing the Mediterranean were grain ships from Egypt, heading to the rest of the Roman Empire (but especially Rome).

21:4 Some Christians in Tyre had received from the Holy Spirit the same message that Paul disclosed in Ephesus: Trouble awaited Paul in Jerusalem (20:22-23).

21:5-6 The departure from the Christians at Tyre resembled the departure from Miletus and the Ephesian elders (20:37-38). They knew Paul was heading for his deepest trouble yet.

21:8 Philip the evangelist was probably so called to distinguish him from other Philips. He was one of those selected to serve in the church in Jerusalem. Philip eventually settled with his daughters in Caesarea. Some believe he may have been one of the original Twelve (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:14). But he is distinctly identified as one of the Seven (6:3).

21:9 The word virgin means Philip’s daughters were young and unmarried.

21:10-11 Agabus explicitly stated that Paul would fall into hostile hands in Jerusalem. As it turned out (21:30-36), Paul was delivered by Gentiles out of Jewish hands, but then remained in Gentile hands throughout the rest of the book of Acts.

21:12 With such an explicit prophecy, it is not surprising that Paul’s traveling companions and the locals begged him not to go on to Jerusalem.

21:13 Paul had already thought about the cost of obedience and decided it was worthwhile.

21:14 Ultimately, the only appropriate response for a believer is the one that Paul’s companions stated: The Lord’s will be done. One of the major themes of the book of Acts is the simultaneous reality of human choice and the sovereign divine will (4:24-28).

21:16 Mnason was a Cypriot believer who had probably been saved during the first missionary journey. Mnason may be a Hellenized form of a Jewish name, or he may have been a Gentile.

21:17 The Jerusalem church was comprised mainly of Christian Jews.

21:18 James is singled out as the leader of the church in Jerusalem, along with a group of elders. It is not clear how many of the original apostles would have still been in Jerusalem, but they do not appear in the following events. This verse marks the end of this “we” section.

21:19 As Paul did in his last major meeting in Jerusalem (15:4), he told James and the church elders what God had been doing among the Gentiles through his ministry.

21:20 Having listened to Paul’s report about what God had done “among the Gentiles” (v. 19), the Jerusalem leadership rejoiced but also answered back with something like one-upmanship. Mention of many thousands of Jews converting in Jerusalem was perhaps exaggeration, for the city had a population between 25,000 and 50,000. At issue in the back-and-forth between Jerusalem leaders and Paul (minister to the Gentiles) is the role of the law in Christian faith; thus the emphasis on Jewish believers being zealous for the law. Perhaps this response also represented an attempt by believers in Jerusalem to strengthen their position as they saw the center of the church shift to Gentile Christians.

21:21 Rumor said Paul was teaching Jews who were dispersed among Gentiles to disregard Mosaic law and traditional Jewish rituals such as circumcision. To dismiss these fears, the brothers proposed a solution that would absolve Paul of the charges (vv. 23-24).

21:23-24 This proposal does not in any way imply that works of the law are necessary for salvation, which would fundamentally contradict Paul's preaching of the gospel (Rm 3:20).

21:25 The issue of the letter had been solved much earlier, and what Paul had or had not encouraged Jews living among Gentiles to do would not be clarified by the proposal of verses 23-24. James was apparently succumbing to pressures from the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Ultimately his proposal backfired (v. 27).

21:26 It is somewhat surprising that Paul agreed to perform the ritual of purification. Perhaps he sensed this was part of God's overall plan, to which he was partially privy (vv. 10-11; 20:22-23).

21:27-29 Paul returned to the temple at the end of the seven days to complete the Nazarite sacrifices. These would have taken place in the Holy Place of the temple. Some Asian Jews spotted Paul there and leveled a specific charge against him, accusing him of defiling the sanctuary by taking the Gentile Trophimus into the sacred precincts. Trophimus was one of the Ephesian church representatives who had accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (20:4). Paul had not taken him into the area that was off-limits to Gentiles. The accusations of the Asian Jews worked, however; and a mob gathered, intent on killing Paul.

21:30-31 The temple was the center of Jerusalem life, for the courtyard served as a "town square." Word of the riot quickly spread, and soon a huge crowd had gathered, screaming for Paul's head. They dragged him out of the sacred area and shut the gates to avoid any further defilement of the temple area. They would have killed Paul had he not been rescued by the timely arrival of the Roman troops.

21:32-33 The Roman occupation force in Jerusalem numbered 1,000 troops. They were housed in the fortress of Antonia, which was built onto the northwest corner of the temple area. Its high towers provided a full view of the temple area. The Roman commander had the rank of a tribune and was the highest-ranking officer in Jerusalem.

21:34-36 Even with the soldiers protecting him, Paul had to be carried as the mob pressed in for the kill. Fortunately the barracks were nearby.

21:37-38 Paul asked permission to speak. His use of Greek surprised the Roman commander ("Claudius Lysias," 23:26). Lysias mistook Paul for an Egyptian rebel. The Jewish historian Josephus said this rebel, a messianic pretender, had gathered a number of people at the Mount of Olives to attack Jerusalem in A.D. 54. The group was routed by the Romans, but the leader escaped. Lysias initially suspected that Paul marked the return of this man.

21:39 That Paul was a citizen of Tarsus, a city of importance in the Greco-Roman world, accounted for his knowledge of Greek.

21:40 Though the text says Hebrew, Paul probably spoke Aramaic to the crowd in order to communicate clearly with them. Aramaic became the new Hebrew, so to speak, among the Jewish people after the exile. In Paul's day Hebrew was used only by the religious elite.