

# 5/5/24 - Acts 21:17-36 - "Participating in the Gospel within Culture"

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Preacher: Brenton Beck

[ 0 : 00 ] Please open your Bibles with me to Acts 21, verses 17 through 36. When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly.

On the following day, Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through this ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. Now take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads.

Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality.

[ 1 : 19 ] Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them.

When the seven days were almost completed, 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 is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law in this place.

Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place. For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

Then all the people, all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.

He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains.

[ 2 : 28 ] He inquired who he was and what he had done. Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another. And as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks.

And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd. For the mob of the people followed him, crying out away with him. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Today we're unpacking quite a stunning text, if I can point it as that today. It's stunning in so many different facets. And I believe at the end of our time, you'll realize how actually stunning it is. Paul has arrived home in Jerusalem.

He's made it. He's done his circuit. And he's arrived. His arrival is marked by quite a few tears of joy. And wouldn't we say that it's marked in quite a few tears of pain, as which was just read.

[ 3 : 31 ] It's marked in physical embrace and also physical harm. But most of all, it is marked by humility in each of the latter instances.

Humility. Humility. And the challenge for us today is that we're going to have to put our thinking cap on today, which is a good thing, I think.

And it's going to be challenging for us because we're going to see and examine how far a Christian can go in laying their freedom in Christ down for others in order to advance the gospel while not compromising the gospel.

In other words, let me paint a picture for all of us this morning and just highlight the culture of Christianity in our world today.

Because many will attack the individual freedom of other Christians, the individual freedom of other Christians, particularly in non-essentials to the faith and salvation.

[ 4 : 55 ] And I think that it's due to the Western world, all this stuff over on this side of the world, is that we can't handle nuance within convictions of conscience of other Christians.

We all want everyone to think like us, be like us, and do exactly how we do it. And so we impose that bondage to other Christians and then demonize them when they fall short of our standards. This is the world we live in. I don't know if it's all over social media. We ask Alistair Begg how that's going for him with all of this culture stuff.

It goes from various things in our world today. From what Christians should wear. Should they wear head coverings and things of that nature?

Should Christians listen to rock music? Or rap music? Or I don't think anybody should listen to country music. But I'm not going to bind your conscience on that one.

[ 6 : 04 ] I know. I'm not a pastor to make people happy, alright? If I were in it for that, I would sell ice cream, right?

It goes from all those things. From should Christians listen to hymns or contemporary music? Should Christians celebrate holidays? From a Christmas tree to Easter eggs to carving pumpkins. It goes all the way to private or public education or homeschooling.

All of a sudden, we oppose our consciences on others. And we just came out of COVID. 2020 was just four years ago. And masks or no masks was a big dividing line.

People left this church because of that issue. Masks or no masks. And I want you to hear this. Well, I believe the intention is good of these people.

[ 7 : 14 ] And that we should all be working towards devotion to God. That should be on our minds. The text today is going to confront extremism.

That's often seen in our day. And it will reveal what it really means to be a Christian. Free in Christ. Within a unique culture that God desires to reach with the gospel. The main point of the text today is that the gospel calls us to abandon sin and self.

And shine within culture. To abandon sin and self. And to shine within culture. And today we're going to break this out into two separate sections.

But there's going to be three movements in the text. And we'll see Paul arriving to his friends. Paul arriving to the temple.

[ 8 : 20 ] And then I'm going to leave that as a section. Then I'm going to also have another section of Paul arriving to bondage. So his friends, temple, and then bondage.

And the sermon title today is participating in the gospel within culture. And we're going to see that main point unfold.

That the gospel calls us to abandon sin and self. And shine within culture. So I invite us all to put our thinking caps on. And to be challenged today in some areas.

That we may have not yet been challenged in. And so let's all come together right now in unity. And pleading for the Holy Spirit to work in all of our hearts.

In our minds. And so that we can shine vibrantly in our culture today. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word. We pray that you make your word swift.

[ 9 : 21 ] That your word passes from ear to heart. And from heart to our lips. And our conversations in our lives.

That as rain returns not empty. So neither may your word. But accomplish for that which it is given. Father, we pray that you do this today. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. So let's break this text down.

Let's unpack it today. The first section is. Paul's arrival is met with joy. Paul's arrival met with joy. And in verse 17.

Let's just read some of this together. Let's see what his arrival was met with when he met his friends. In verse 17. When we had come to Jerusalem.

[10:23] Remember this is Luke. Luke is involved in this. Luke is down there on ground zero. Writing down everything that is occurring. And we had come to Jerusalem.

And the brothers received us gladly. So there's a G word. Gladness. In this passage. They were received with gladness. And in verse 18.

On the following day. Paul met. Paul went in with us to James. This is James. The brother of Jesus. In Jerusalem. And not only James.

The brother of Jesus. But all the elders. The council of elders. Were all present. And after greeting them. He related. One by one.

The things that God had done. Among the Gentiles. Through his ministry. And in verse 20. We see another G word. Not only gladness.

[11:18] But when they heard it. They glorified God. You see. His mission report. That he went. He went elder to elder.

Sitting with them. Sharing the stories. Of going to Athens. With a bunch of stoic philosophers. And preaching to these pagan lands.

One by one. This has been a success. And context of this passage. Says that he actually brought with him. To Jerusalem. A pretty hefty.

Gentile offering. As well. He set the bucket. A change. On the table. He says. God is doing. A magnificent. Work. And so this.

Report was. Met with gladness. And glory. To God. But. It was also. Met with a problem. At the second. End of 20.

[12:18] Was it saying. And they said to him. You see brother. How many thousands. There are among the Jews. Of those who have believed. They are zealous.

For the law. And they have. Been told. That you. Teach all the Jews. That are among the Gentiles. To forsake Moses.

Telling them not to circumcise. Their children. Or walk. In according to. Our. Customs. Jewish. Customs. Jewish. Culture. And so there's a lot of false accusations.

That are unfolding here. These guys have. These guys have converted to Christianity. From Judaism. And. They're zealous for the law.

Just as Paul was zealous for the law. He was. A zealous Pharisee. Before coming to know. Jesus Christ. And turning his life. Over to the Lord.

[13:16] Lord. And so these false accusations. Unfold. He's forsaking. He's telling the Jews. He's converted Jews. To forsake Moses. To. Never do a preaching series.

Through Deuteronomy. Shame on you. Christians. Right. Forsaking Moses. Telling them not to circumcise. Their children. Telling them. Not to walk in. According.

To. Customs. Or the culture. And now from this standpoint. We've. If you've been in this series. For any length of time. You see that. These accusations. Are pretty unfair.

Of Paul. I mean. After all. Paul. Had Timothy. What? Circumcised. Right? In Acts 16. Paul. In Acts 18. Took the Nazarite.

Vow. Himself. And not only that. Over the last. Recent weeks. We've seen Paul. Jump in ship. To ship. To ship. Getting back to Jerusalem.

[14:11] Not for vacation. But to observe Pentecost. The feast of Pentecost. To participate in it. You see.

Paul was. Very zealous. For the law. But he was mature enough. In his faith. To understand what is essential. For salvation.

And what is helpful. For evangelism. To reach. A culture. So they think. In verse 22. How do we solve this.

Problem. Paul. You're not. A celebrity. Over here. They're after you. How do we solve this? Well. In verse 22. All the way to 24.

They propose. The solution. To this problem. What do we do about. These. Believing Jews. These Christian Jews. Well. Let's put Paul.

[15:07] In a situation. Where his actions. Will speak louder. Than any words. That they can conclude. About Paul. Paul. Go into the temple. We got an idea. Go into the temple.

Go through. Ritual purification. And make it. Really count. At the end. Of this ritual. Purification. You will then. Be qualified. To participate.

In this. Concluding. Ceremony. Of these. Four. Men. Who are under. The Nazarite. Vow. Within our congregation. You'll participate. And what. What we want you to do.

Paul. Is to. Cash in on it. Pay for those. Expenses. For that. Nazarite. Vow. There's a lot of. Historical. Context.

That I think. Is really important. For us to understand. What's going on here. Especially with the. Seven day. Of. Purification. And the expenses. Within the Nazarite. Vow.

[16:03] But first off. The seven days. Of purification. In order for Paul. To participate. In that Nazarite. Vow. Ceremony. He would. In a Jewish. Standpoint.

In a perspective. He would. Have to undergo. Cleansing. Ritual. Purification. Why? Well. According to numbers. Nineteen.

Verse. Twelve. Paul. Paul. Paul. Paul. Was returning. From Gentile. Territory. There's cooties there. Gentile.

Territory. You can't bring those. Into the temple. And this will show him. Those Jews. That Paul is devoted. To. The law.

According to numbers. Nineteen. But to pay for the. To foot the bill. For the Nazarite vow. This closing ceremony. The Nazarite vow. This is the icing.

[16:56] On the cake. That might mean. Nothing to you. Unless you. Turn to numbers. Nine. We don't have enough. Time today. To do that. But in numbers. Nine. I can articulate.

The emphasis. Of what that cost. Was. So. At the concluding. Ceremony. Of the Nazarite vow. You would have to bring in. A one year old. One year old. Male lamb.

A one year old. Spotless female. Ew. And then. A. Another ram. You have to bring. Unleavened bread. You'd have to. Have loaves. Made of fine flour. You'd have to.

Bring a grain offering. And wine. Everything. With Jewish culture. Is wine. And bring that. Now. If you were to Google. Right now. And use our cool.

Tech savvy. AI. In our world today. You'd probably find that. A young lamb. About that. That size. Would cost somewhere around. Three hundred dollars. In our day today. And so. I mean.

[17:52] That's. That's the. The cheapest price. That you could find. It could go up to. Eight hundred. And now. I don't know. If that's. Factual. Or what. I'm not going to argue. How much a lamb costs today.

I will argue. That if you take the cost. Of the lamb. Of the spotless ew. Of the ram. All the ingredients. For the unleavened bread. The grain offering.

The wine. If you put all that together. It's easily a thousand dollars. Per person. And so. What they're telling Paul. To do. Is take. His own money. Pay.

Out of his devotion. To the Nazarite. Balloon. For these men. To literally. Bank. Over four thousand dollars. To show. These Jews. Who accuse him. Of these things.

All to confront. Critics. Cash in Paul. Four grand. In that. How many of us.

[18:49] Today. Would be looking at our. Huntington account. And being like. Man honey. Do we have four grand. I'm just sitting around. Maybe we need to. Contact our.

CPA. Take out of retirement. How many of us. Would have concluded. You know what. Who really cares. About what they're saying.

I want you to think about this. Seriously church. How many of us. Would say. You know what.

Forget about them. It's obviously. Untrue. God knows my heart.

And we'll go on with it. Throwing on Taylor Swift. Haters gonna hate. Hate. Hate. Hate. And just blasting it. For all the Jews. To hear.

Walking down the streets. Of Jerusalem. Skipping. Saying that they can. Suck it up. Forget about all of this. Four grand guys.

[19:48] But look at the text. Paul. Didn't. Say forget about it. This is absolutely stunning.

Paul's arrival. Was marked in. Gladness. Of glory. To God. But it was also. Marked. By him. Laying aside.

His free expression. In Christ. Of worship. In Christ. To conform himself. And participate. To something.

That he was no longer. Obligated to do. Because of his faith. In Christ. He didn't have. He was not obligated. To be ritually.

Purified. He was not obligated. To. Do anything. With the Nazarite. Vow. But he chose. To do it. In other words. He was. Participating.

[ 20 : 45 ] In. Non. Essentials. The state of Christianity. Today. Has folks. Digging.

In. Their heels. In. In the preservation. Of their individual. Freedom. In Christ. We've adopted a. NRA. Sort of mentality. Don't. Tread. On. Me. As a Christian. Culture. This was not. Paul's concern. Here. At all. In fact. Many. Today. Would probably. Accused. Paul. If Paul. Was here. Today. Doing. What. Paul. Is doing. Here.

Today. I'm telling you. He would be called. A heretic. By a lot. Of Christians. Today. He would be called. A heretic. He would be called. A compromiser.

[ 21 : 43 ] Of the faith. Because he's going. Through. With all these things. That aren't required. Paul's wearing. A mask. How could he be. A Christian. Don't believe me.

Open your eyes. To the culture. It's happening. Around us. Paul's missionary. Policy. Should serve. To balance.

Our conscience. To keep the essentials. Essential. Okay. He wrote. To the Corinthian church. In his second. His first letter. To the Corinthians.

And. He said. To the weak. I became. What? Weak. That I may. Win. The. Weak. I have become. All things.

To all people. That by. All means. I might. Save. Some. I do it. All. For the sake. Of the gospel.

[ 22 : 39 ] That I may. Share with them. In its. Blessings. Why is Paul doing. All of this? Why are they presenting.

All of this? Verse. 24. The end of verse 24. Says. Thus. All will know. That there is. Nothing. In what they have been told.

About you. But that you yourself. Also live. In observance. Of. The law. You see.

Paul's arrival. In Jerusalem. Was marked. By an evangelistic. Mission. Under which. All his freedoms. Were constrained.

He was allowing. Himself. To put aside. His freedom in Christ. Freedom from all this stuff. In order to gain. Credibility. And to. Push. The gospel mission.

[ 23 : 35 ] Forward. To show. The Jewish. Christians. It's okay. To participate. In these.

Non-essentials. But it's not okay. To worship.

Those non-essentials. And this is huge. Because Paul's entire message. Was abandonment. We saw that in Athens. In Areopagus. Remember that big.

Athens scene. That Carmen preached on. Telling them to. Turn from their idols. Abandon. Their idols. This was actually in the text here.

In verse 25. Five. This has been the thing. That Gentiles. Have also believed. We sent the letter. With our judgment. This is going back. To the Jerusalem council.

That they. They resolved on. What do they tell them? That they should abstain. Abandon. And withhold. From what has been.

[ 24 : 35 ] Sacrificed to idol. And from blood. And from. What has been strangled. And from sexual immorality. Paul's message. Has been. Abandonment. Abandon. Abandon. Sin. And guess what?

Abandon. Self. Romans 12. To live. As a living. Sacrifice. To God. Abandon. Sin. And abandon. Self. And the observable fruit. Of the message. What's produced from it? Humility. And generosity. And generosity. For the sake. Of unity. Of the church. And the mission. Of the church. The whole reason. It's a Christian.

It's a Christian. Who says. That I'll give. To the church. Anything that it needs. In order that the mission. May keep. In motion. I will submit. My personal. Expressions. Of freedom.

[ 25 : 32 ] At times. In order to serve. The collective. Body. Lay myself. And my. Ideas. And my conscience. Down. On behalf of. My brothers.

And sisters. Or I will lay. My life. Down. For my church. Family. To keep. That gospel. Moving. And guess what? It only took.

One verse. To give Paul's response. Verse 26. Then Paul took. The men. He just said. Okay. I'll do that. Took the men. And the next day. He purified himself.

Along with them. And went into the temple. Giving notice. When the days. Of purification. Would be fulfilled. And. The offering. Presented. For each one of them.

He. Swiped his Huntington card. Prayed that that transaction. Would go through. He's got the. Got the animals. And the bread. All laid out. Everything's in order.

[ 26 : 25 ] He's broke. And. Pure. Then we see. And we ask ourselves. The question. What would we have done.

If we were in Paul's shoes. This leads to the next day. In the second section. Of Paul's arrival. Met with hostility. In verse.

27. The Jews. Inevitably. Find. Paul. Which leads to the entire city. Finding Paul. And they shout this. Fire alarm warning.

We got Paul here. And look. In verse 27. Towards the. When the seven days. Were almost completed. The Jews from Asia.

Seeing him in the temple. Stirred up the whole crowd. And create a mob. They laid. And laid hands on him. Crying out. Men of Israel. Help.

[ 27 : 21 ] Sound the alarm. This is the man. Who is teaching everyone. Everywhere. Against the people. And the law. And this place. There's three accusations.

In that statement. Paul is anti-Semitic. Paul is anti-Moses. And Paul is anti-temple. And look. Even Luke. Luke includes. A little bit of a narrative.

Of how they created that conclusion. Because he brought Trophimus. Into the temple. And they assumed. That that guy was Greek. And now. It takes a little bit of understanding. About a temple. I'm not in. An archaeological. Major. Of anything. But I do know. That's the significance. Of what Paul. Did here. Is. What from their eyes.

Is a. Offense. Worthy. Of death. Lawful. Death. For a. Gentile.

[ 28 : 16 ] To be brought. Through the Gentile court. Into the. Jewish court. They would be met. With a. Sign. And guess what. It was written. In.

Red. Just to make it. A little bit. That's their bold. Italics. On that sign. And it said. No. Stranger. Is to enter. Within.

In. The. Thence. Around the temple. And enclosure. Whoever. Is caught. Will be responsible. To himself. For his death.

Which. Will. Ensnare. Not might. Ensnare. Not. After convicted. By. The Roman government. No. The Jewish nation. Being a nation. Within a nation. Is able. Is able. To lawfully. Bring about. The execution. Of anybody. Who violates.

[ 29 : 11 ] That. The Jews. Are like. Ooh. This is our time. We see Paul. And he has a stranger. Is he a Jew? Who cares? Let's call him a Gentile.

And get our way. End this. Nonsense. And get back. To our Jewish. Observance. The ink. Was in red.

This was a wall. Of hostility. And Paul. Is facing. Execution. Along with. Trophimus. And. And look with me.

For a minute. Look at this mob scene. That takes place. In verse 30. Then all the city. Was. Stirred up. And the people. Ran together.

They seized. Paul. You see this language. Here. Stirred up. Ran together. Laid their hands. Seized Paul. And dragged him out. To the temple.

[ 30 : 06 ] And at once. The gates were shut. They got him out. Removed from the temple. And shut those gates. And. In verse 31. And as they were seeking. To. Kill them.

Lawfully. Kill him. Word came through. Came to the. The tribune. Of this day. Of the cohorts. That all Jerusalem.

Was in confusion. This tribune. Was. Was in a. Standpoint. Where he could oversee. All the thousands of people. That he was in charge of. This is a military official.

Cohorts. Centurions. At all the language. Points to that. He was the officer. Of the law. Who would be able to. Keep this crowd. In control. Or. Not.

And so. He sees this. Riot. Of people. Swarming like ants. All around. A man. And they're just being mad chaos.

[ 31 : 00 ] This is Ephesus all over again. In verse 32. He at once. Took soldiers and centurions. And ran down to them. He brings his police officers.

And when they saw the. The tribune. And the soldiers. They stopped beating. Paul. And then the tribune.

Came. Up. And arrested him. And ordered him. To be bound. With two chains. Haven't we heard that. Before. From the lips of. Agabus. Before Paul.

Left. For Jerusalem. And then in verse. 33. You can imagine the. Chaos of this scene. But the sweetness.

Of a moment. Between. This. Officer of the law. High ranking official. And Paul. Battered.  
[ 31 : 57 ] Bloody. And broken. With chains. Ripping his skin. On his hands. And his feet. The officer. Gets down. To Paul.

And says. He inquired. Who Paul was. Who are you. And what have you done. Verse 34.  
The chaos continues. It's like that. Pause button. In a movie. And then it goes back. And pans out. To the chaos. Some of the crowd. Were shouting. One thing. Some another. And as he. Could not learn.

The facts. Because of the uproar. He ordered him. To be. Brought into the barracks. And look at this. He almost died. Doing it. Verse 35. And when he came.

To the steps. He. He was actually. Carried up. By the. Soldiers. Because of the violence. Of the crowd. And in verse 36. The mob. Of the people.

[ 32 : 52 ] Followed. Crying. Out. Away. With. Him. And. We put a pause. On the scene. Today. In the narrative. This is.

Mob. Violence. This is. The fruit. Of Paul. Laying aside. His freedom. In Christ.

Chains. Blood. Scars. God only knows. How many ribs. Were broken. They were. Planning. On killing. Paul.

And we should see. Some textual movements. That Luke is. Made. Making. Because this is the result. At times. Of. Humility. This is.

The. Result. Of. Christ. Likeness. This is what. Christ. Likeness. Often. Pans out. To look like. That. Humility.

[ 33 : 53 ] Can. Be. Humiliating. Right. But it. Doesn't. Make it. Wrong. To humble. Ourselves. At times. Luke.

Is. Vividly. Presenting. The gospel. Here. And how. A Christian. Ought. To participate. In it. We've. Seen. It. All the way. Since. His travels. All the way. Back. To Jerusalem. Just as. Paul.

Travels. To Jerusalem. Jesus. Christ. It. Shadows. Jesus. Christ. Traveling. To Jerusalem. Just as. Paul. Laid down. His liberty. And freedom. Down. For the sake.

Of others. So too. Jesus. Did the same. Just as. A crowd. Shouted. To. Paul. Away. With him. So too. The words.

Came from. This chanting. Crowd. Crucify him. I mean. Can't you see it? Jesus. Christ. Endured. All. This is what. Christ. Like this. Often.

[ 34 : 45 ] Results. In. Jesus. Christ. Endured. All of this. To save. And redeem. If you're not a Christian. Today. And you want to know.

How much. Worth. You have. In Jesus. Christ's eyes. This is a picture. Of it. Blood. Willing.

To die. As Paul. Attested. To all those. Before he left. To Jerusalem. I'm willing. To give my life. For the sake. Of the gospel. And all Jesus.

Says. To anyone. Who is right. Here. Today. Not in faith. Is just simply. To believe. And to pick up. Your cross. And to follow him.

For Christians. This is a model. For us. If we're. We've been speaking. Of. The cost. Of following. Jesus Christ. Over the past.

[ 35 : 43 ] Several weeks. Guess what? Here it is. The cost. Of laying down. Your life. For others. Laying down.

Your freedom. In Christ. For others. For us. But that will pick up. In Paul's defense. Next week. But many of us.

Today. Might inquire. Of Paul. When we see him. In eternity. We'll ask of him. Was. Was all of that. Worth it? Paul?

Was that worth it? Was it worth. To lay down. Your personal. Freedom. In Jesus Christ. For the sake of another. Worth it? Was it.

Worth going. Throughout all Asia. Jump in. Ship. To ship. To arrive. At Pentecost. For this. Was it worth.

[ 36 : 42 ] Spending. Over four thousand dollars. On a couple animals. Just to testify. To your innocence. To confront the. Accusations.

Was it worth. All of that. Just to receive. To receive. Beatings. And humiliation. From the world. Second Corinthians.

Chapter 11. Paul answers. For us. Very loudly. For us. Today. And I want you to hear this church. Paul will take.

All his beatings. All his hardships. Indicating that they are. All marks. Of weakness. Of weakness. Which validate.

His relationship. And union. With Jesus Christ. And he will say. On that day. When we ask him. Was it. Worth it. He will say.

[ 37 : 37 ] Yes. Because. I participated. In the sufferings. Of Jesus Christ. Is the mark.

Of your life. Laying down. Yourself. For. The mission. Paul. Exemplifies. How Christians. Should not.

Sterilize. Themselves. From traditions. Or culture. Things. Especially. Non-essential. Traditions. But to participate.

In culture. At different times. Without worshiping. Culture. Participating. Without worshiping. And I was not saying.

To participate. In sin. I'm not saying. That at all. Nor was Paul. Saying that. When he was in Athens. Speaking to the Gentile. False. Religions.

[ 38 : 34 ] Not saying. To participate. In sin. Because the gospel. Is counter-cultural. But if the gospel. Is counter-cultural. Church. You can't. Be counter-cultural.

By removing. Yourself. From. Culture. There's nothing. To be counter-to. You're just. An alien. To the world. Nobody knows. Your name. Nobody knows. Your message. Nobody actually. Even cares. About what you have to say. Because.

You're weird. You're. You're. Disconnected. From all. Reality. You live. With. Without electricity. Out in a farm. That's disconnected. From all. Society. Right?

Now. Some may take this. To extreme degrees. On either end. Of the spectrum. Of lawlessness. To legalism. So for. Lawlessness.

[ 39 : 29 ] Some will. Integrate. Into the culture. So far. That you can't identify. Where the world ends. And the church begins. Right? And so.

On this side. Of lawlessness. The gospel. Becomes obsolete. But it's also. On this side. Of legalism. That some.

That some. Will withdraw. From culture. So far. That they. Demonize. Every. Minor. Facet. Of culture. That is not essential.

To. The faith. And so. Guess what? The gospel. Also. Becomes. Obsolete. All the way. Over here. Too. Because no one's. Listening. Both.

Are errors. On each side. But church. This is what I'm driving home today. Is that there is. Middle. Ground. Marked. In Paul's arrival. And actions here.

[ 40 : 25 ] That show us. How to. Wisely. And biblically. Be a Christian. And practice. Liberty. Within a culture. It takes wisdom.

It takes prayer. And it takes humility. Paul didn't. Demonize. Culture. To try to. Sterilize it. And be like him.

Or to integrate. Fully. With the culture. No. He participated. Within culture. To win. The culture. That's what Paul did. And maturity.

In a Christian's life. Says that participation. Is not equal. To worship. Participation. Is not equal. To worship. And so.

Don't use your freedom. In Christ. For lawlessness. To sin with the culture. Use your freedom. To win the culture. Like Paul. And may wisdom.

[ 41 : 23 ] May prayer. And humility. Be our guides. As we navigate. These nuances. Regarding things. Of our conscience. You see. The gospel.

Calls us. To abandon sin. And abandon self. And to shine. Within culture. And I pray. That God. May grant us all. The maturity.

That we need. To pursue that mission. Well. At Steel Valley Church. Let's pray. Amen. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.