

Sacrificing to Serve

Acts 21:17-26 ▪ February 12, 2023 ▪ Brad Manley

Serving can be _____ . (vv. 17-22)

Serving requires _____ . (vv. 23-26)

Acts 21:17-26

¹⁷ When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. ¹⁸ On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ 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, ²¹ 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.

²² What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; ²⁴ 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.²⁵ 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.”²⁶ 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. (ESV)

Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions

Open: Share about a time you've been misunderstood.

Read: Acts 21:17-26

1. In verses 17-20a, Paul and others celebrate the work of God among the Gentiles. Based on what we've studied so far in Acts, what might Paul have said when he "related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles" (v. 19)? Why is it important that we recognize and celebrate God's work in one another's lives? How can we grow in this area—both you personally and us as a church family?
2. The leaders at Jerusalem informed Paul that the Gospel was also spreading among the Jews, but along with it was the misunderstanding that Paul opposed obedience to Jewish law (vv. 20-21). Why would this misrepresentation of Paul have been such a problem? How have you seen wrong information damage the ministry of a church or a Christian?
3. According to verses 23-24, how did the leaders at Jerusalem seek to solve this problem? If Paul lived "in observance of the law" (v. 24b), how do you think this related to his understanding of salvation through Christ? (Read Galatians 2:15-16.) How would this public act (v. 24a) on Paul's part have helped the spread of the Gospel?
4. We could easily think of Paul as a strong, independent leader in the church. But what does his choice in verse 26 (noting also verse 23) tell us about his character? Why is it important to be willing to submit ourselves to the community of believers, especially those who have more experience or who have roles involving authority? How does this complement the fact that we are each called to have an individual relationship with Christ and are each led by His Spirit?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. How is what Paul is doing in Acts 21 an example of what he taught in 1 Corinthians 9? What are some specific ways that we could apply this principle in our context?

Apply: How might Paul's example here shape how we approach ministry to others?

Pray: Ask God to help us know how to live in order to best facilitate the spread of the Gospel.