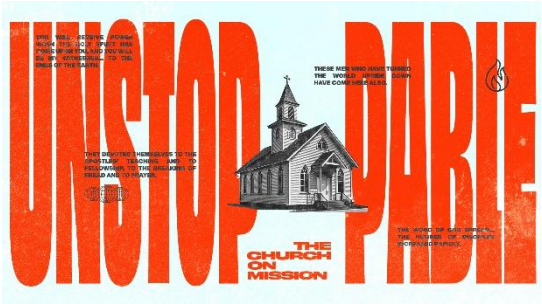


GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Unstoppable Church Wk 22: Zeal for the Lord
Acts 21:17–40
11.08.26 | Grayson Bundick

About This Week's Message:

As Paul arrives in Jerusalem in Acts 21, he is welcomed by the church and shares all that God has accomplished through his ministry among the Gentiles. However, despite the incredible work God has done, Paul quickly finds himself surrounded by misunderstanding, accusations, and opposition. Rumors have spread about his teaching, and even though he willingly humbles himself to preserve unity within the church, he is falsely accused, beaten, and arrested.

In this passage, we see Paul's unwavering commitment to Jesus and the gospel through three important examples: Humility for the Sake of Unity, Perseverance Amidst Persecution, and Opposition as an Opportunity. Paul demonstrates that being right is not always as important as being willing to humble ourselves for the sake of others. He reminds us that obedience to God does not guarantee freedom from hardship, and he shows us how even the most difficult circumstances can become opportunities for God to work through us.

Grayson challenges us to consider what we are truly zealous for. The believers in Jerusalem were passionate about the law and their religious traditions, but Paul was passionate about following Jesus and making Him known. As a church seeking the presence of God, we are called to examine what captures our hearts and directs our lives. God's presence is our greatest need, and our presence is His great delight. Our desire should be to make room for His presence, surrender every part of our lives to His leadership, and remain faithful to His purposes, even when obedience comes at a cost.

Goals of This Week's Discussion:

- Recognize the importance of humility and unity within the body of Christ, even when we believe we are right.
- Understand that zeal for God must be rooted in love, obedience, and a willingness to put others before ourselves.
- Learn from Paul's example of perseverance when facing misunderstanding, false accusations, and persecution.
- Recognize that opposition and difficult circumstances can become opportunities to share the gospel and demonstrate God's faithfulness.

Connections with the 7-Marks of a Jesus Follower:

- **Stand in Awe**: Cultivate a deep desire for God's presence, recognizing that He alone is worthy of our worship, devotion, and surrender.
- **Play Your Part**: Pursue unity within the church and look for opportunities to encourage others, share the gospel, and participate in God's work.
- **Keep in Step**: Follow the Holy Spirit's leading with courage and perseverance, even when obedience brings opposition or misunderstanding.
- **Live Free**: Release pride, defensiveness, and the need to be right, choosing humility and healthy relationships within the body of Christ.

Starter Questions:

- Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you knew you were right but had to decide whether proving your point was worth the cost to a relationship?
- How do you typically respond when someone misunderstands your intentions or makes assumptions about you?
- When you think about being passionate or zealous for something, what comes to mind? What things in your life receive the greatest amount of your time, energy, and attention?

Read 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,[a] 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.

Discussion:

- What stands out to you about Paul's interaction with James and the elders in Jerusalem?
- Why were the Jewish believers concerned about the rumors circulating regarding Paul's teaching?
- What do you notice about Paul's willingness to participate in the purification rituals, even though he understood that salvation comes through faith in Jesus rather than obedience to the law?
- How does Paul's response demonstrate humility and a desire for unity within the church?

Read Galatians 3:23–26

23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

Discussion:

- What does Paul teach about the purpose of the law and our relationship to it through faith in Jesus?
- How does understanding our freedom in Christ help us make sense of Paul's willingness to participate in Jewish purification customs?
- Why is it important to distinguish between biblical truth and personal preferences or religious traditions?
- How can we exercise our freedom in Christ while remaining sensitive to the needs and convictions of others?

Read Philippians 2:3–4

[3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Discussion:

- How does Paul's behavior in Jerusalem reflect the instruction he gives to the Philippian church?
- Why is humility essential to maintaining unity within the body of Christ?
- How can our desire to be right sometimes become an obstacle to loving others well?
- Where might God be asking you to choose humility over personal preference or the need to defend yourself?

Read Acts 21:27–36

[27] 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, [28] crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." [29] For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. [30] Then 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. [31] And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. [32] 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. [33] Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done. [34] 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. [35] And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, [36] for the mob of the people followed, crying out, "Away with him!"

Discussion:

- What accusations were made against Paul, and what assumptions contributed to the crowd's reaction?
- Why is it significant that Paul experienced persecution even after humbling himself and seeking unity?
- Have you ever experienced misunderstanding or criticism while trying to do what you believed God was asking you to do?
- How can we remain faithful to Jesus when our obedience does not produce the outcome we expected?

Read John 15:20 and John 16:33

20 Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Discussion:

- What does Jesus tell His disciples to expect as they follow Him?
- Why is it important to understand that obedience to Jesus does not guarantee a comfortable or trouble-free life?
- How does Jesus' promise that He has overcome the world give us confidence in the middle of opposition?
- Grayson reminded us that our peace through all of God's plans is His presence. How does that truth change the way we approach difficult circumstances?

Read Acts 21:37–40

37 As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, “May I say something to you?” And he said, “Do you know Greek? 38 Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?” 39 Paul replied, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people.” 40 And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps,

motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying:

Discussion:

- What surprises you about Paul's response after being beaten, arrested, and falsely accused?
- Why do you think Paul asks for an opportunity to speak to the very people who were seeking to harm him?
- How does Paul's response demonstrate that his greatest concern was making Jesus known rather than protecting his own reputation?
- What would it look like to approach our frustrations and difficulties by asking how God might be working through them?

Read Romans 8:28

[28] And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Discussion:

- What does this verse teach us about God's ability to work through difficult circumstances?
- Why is our first response to difficulty often to ask God to remove the problem rather than asking what He might be doing through it?
- Have you experienced a difficult situation that God later used for something good?
- How might our prayers change if we consistently approached challenges with the attitude, “Not my will, but Yours be done”?

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1 and 14:12

1 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

[12] So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

Discussion:

- What do these verses teach us about having a genuine desire for the things of God?
- How does Paul connect spiritual passion with love and building up the church?
- What is the difference between being zealous for religious traditions and being zealous for the presence and purposes of God?
- Grayson asked an important question: If Paul wrote a letter to Revive Church, what would he say we are passionate about? How would you answer that question?

Reflection:

- Are there relationships where your desire to be right has become more important than your willingness to pursue humility and unity?
- How do you respond when others misunderstand your intentions or question your obedience to God?
- Are you willing to remain faithful to Jesus even when obedience brings discomfort, criticism, or opposition?
- When you experience frustration or disappointment, do you primarily ask God to change your circumstances, or do you also ask Him to reveal what He is doing through them?
- Are there areas of your life where you have invited Jesus to be present but have not fully surrendered to His leadership?

Application:

- Choose Humility for the Sake of Unity. Identify a relationship or situation where you have been more focused on proving your point than pursuing peace. Ask God to help you respond with humility, grace, and love.
- Persevere Through Opposition. If you are experiencing misunderstanding, criticism, or hardship because of your faith, ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen you and help you remain faithful to Jesus.
- Make Room for God's Presence. Set aside intentional time this week for prayer, worship, and listening to the Holy Spirit. Ask God how you can more fully welcome His presence into every area of your life.

- Practice Surrender. Identify an area where compromise has become easier than obedience. Confess it to the Lord and take a practical step toward following His leading.

Pray:

- Ask God to help us become people who pursue humility and unity, putting the needs of others before our own desire to be right.
- Pray for courage and perseverance when following Jesus brings misunderstanding, opposition, or hardship.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help us recognize opportunities for God's work in the middle of difficult and unexpected circumstances.
- Pray that our passion for Jesus would be greater than our attachment to personal preferences, religious traditions, or worldly priorities.
- Invite God to reveal areas of compromise, pride, or resistance that are keeping us from fully surrendering to His leadership.
- Pray that Revive Church would be known as a people who are zealous for the Lord, faithfully following the Holy Spirit and preparing a place for God's presence wherever we live, work, study, and play.