

**Acts 21 “Free to Love”**  
**Acts 21:15-26**  
**April 20, 2026**

Acts 21:15-26

15 After this we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. 16 Some of the disciples from Caesarea also went with us and brought us to Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to stay.

17 When we reached Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters welcomed us warmly. 18 The following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. 19 After greeting them, he reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

20 When they heard it, they glorified God and said, “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.

21 But they have been informed about you—that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or to live according to our customs. 22 So what is to be done? They will certainly hear that you’ve come. 23 Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have made a vow. 24 Take these men, purify yourself along with them, and pay for them to get their heads shaved. Then everyone will know that what they were told about you amounts to nothing, but that you yourself are also careful about observing the law. 25 With regard to the Gentiles who have believed, we have written a letter containing our decision that they should keep themselves from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what is strangled, and from sexual immorality.” 26 So the next day, Paul took the men, having purified himself along with them, and entered the temple, announcing the completion of the purification days when the offering would be made for each of them.

The situation and the principle.

Did Paul have to shave his head?

Is Paul compromising the new freedoms that come in Christ?

1 Corinthians 8:1-6

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that “we all have knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. 2 If anyone thinks he knows anything, he does not yet know it as he ought to know it. 3 But if anyone loves God, he is known by him.

4 About eating food sacrificed to idols, then, we know that “an idol is nothing in the world,” and that “there is no God but one.” 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth—as there are many “gods” and many “lords”— 6 yet for us there is one God, the Father. All things are from him, and we exist for him. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ. All things are through him, and we exist through him.

Food sacrifices.

How do you bridge these categories of Christians?

1 Corinthians 8:8

8 Food will not bring us close to God. We are not worse off if we don't eat, and we are not better if we do eat.

1 Corinthians 8:13

13 Therefore, if food causes my brother or sister to fall, I will never again eat meat, so that I won't cause my brother or sister to fall.

The principle Paul is forming is that love is greater than liberty.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

19 Although I am free from all and not anyone's slave, I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to win more people. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law—though I myself am not under the law—to win those under the law. 21 To those who are without the law, like one without the law—though I am not without God's law but under the law of Christ—to win those without the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some. 23 Now I do all this because of the gospel, so that I may share in the blessings.

The gospel has made Paul agile.

The goal is winning people.

Galatians 5:6

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision accomplishes anything; what matters is faith working through love.

True freedom is being able to operate at the level of my deepest principles.

### **Life Group Discussion Questions**

- 1.) What did God say to you through His Word during our Sunday gathering?
- 2.) Have you ever done something to fit in or to be accepted by a group of people?
- 3.) In what ways has Christianity made you more free?
- 4.) Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.
- 5.) Paul is working from acceptance already received in Christ, not changing to be accepted. Why is this such a critical difference?
- 6.) If Christians are the most free people, then how does 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 help us understand what all that freedom is for?
- 7.) How far are we able to go and adjust in order to share the gospel with someone? When have you gone too far?
- 8.) Describe how we might we limit our freedoms in order to share the gospel?
- 9.) If winning another person to Christ is the primary goal, what other conversations and topics would become secondary and less important?
- 10.) Who is someone that you could move towards this week?