

Katamares: Acts: 21:15-26.

21:16 *The House of Mnason of Cyprus*

It Is in Our Power to Welcome Christ.

Chrysostom: Paul was the guest he welcomed. Perhaps one of you will say, "If Paul was given to me as a guest to welcome, I would receive him readily and with great enthusiasm." But look, it is possible for you to welcome Paul's master as your guest, and you refuse. "For he who welcomes," says he, "the least among you welcomes me."²³ Inasmuch as the brother is "the least," so much the more is Christ present through him. For he who welcomes the mighty often does so for the sake of vainglory, but he who welcomes the lowly does so honestly, for the sake of Christ. It is even possible for you to welcome the father of Christ, and you refuse. "For I was a stranger, and you invited me in."²⁴ "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers who believe in me, you did for me."²⁵ Even if he is not Paul but a brother who believes and even if he is the least, Christ is present through him. Open your house, take him in. "Anyone who receives a prophet will receive a prophet's reward."²⁶ So likewise he who receives Christ will receive the reward due to one who welcomes Christ. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 45. ²⁷

21:18 *Paul Goes to James*

21:19 *What God Had Done Among the Gentiles*

Wishing to Show God's Mercy.

Chrysostom: Again Paul describes to them in detail the things relating to the Gentiles. He does this not to indulge in vainglory, God forbid, but because he wishes to show the mercy of God and fill them with great joy. ⁵ Look at the result: "When they heard it, they glorified God." It was not upon Paul that they bestowed their praise and admiration. For he described everything in such a way as to refer it all to [God]. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 46. ⁶

21:20 Zealous for the Law

Respect for God-Given Ordinances.

Augustine: It is quite clear, I think, that James gave this advice in order to show the falsity of the views supposed to be Paul's, which certain Jews who had come to believe in Christ, but who were still "zealous for the law," had heard about him, namely, that through the teaching of Christ the commandments, written by the direction of God and transmitted by Moses to the fathers, were to be thought sacrilegious and worthy of rejection. These reports were not circulated about Paul by those who understood the spirit in which the Jewish converts felt bound to those observances, namely, because of their being prescribed by a divine authority and for the sake of the prophetic holiness of those ceremonies but not for the attaining of salvation, which has now been revealed in Christ and is conferred by the sacrament of baptism. Those who spread this rumor about Paul were the ones who wished to make these observances as binding as if without them there could be no salvation in the gospel for believers. For they had experienced him as a most vigorous preacher of grace and as one who taught the exact opposite of their view, that one is not justified by these but by the grace of Jesus Christ and that all the ordinances of the law were foreshadowing meant to announce him. That was why they tried to stir up hatred and persecution against him, making him out to be an enemy of the law and of the divine commandments, and there was no more fitting way for him to repel the injustice of this false charge than by performing personally the ceremonies that he was supposed to condemn as sacrilegious. In this way [Paul] would prove two things: that the Jews were not to be prevented from observing these obligations as if they were wrong and that the Gentiles were not to be forced to observe them as if they were necessary. Letter 82.7

Shadows of Things to Come.

Augustine: I say, therefore, that circumcision and other ordinances of this sort were divinely revealed to the former people through the Testament which we call Old, as types of future things, which were to be fulfilled by Christ. When this fulfillment had come, those obligations remained for the instruction of Christians, to be read simply for the understanding of the previous prophecy, but not to be performed through necessity, as if people had still to await the coming revelation of the faith that was foreshadowed by these things. However, although they were not to be imposed on the Gentiles, they were not thereby to be removed from the customary life of the Jews, as if they were worthy of scorn and condemnation. Gradually, therefore, and by degrees, through the fervent preaching of the grace of Christ, by which alone believers were to know that they were justified and saved—not by those shadows of things, formerly

future but now present and at hand—through the conversion of those Jews whom the presence of the Lord in the flesh and the times of the apostles found living thus, all that activity of the shadows was to be ended. This was to be enough praise for it, that it was not to be avoided and despised as idolatry was, but was to have no further development and was not to be thought necessary, as if salvation either depended on it or could not be had without it. This is what some heretics thought, who wanted to be both Jews and Christians and could be neither Jews nor Christians. You [i.e., Jerome] were so kind as to warn me very earnestly against that opinion, although I have never held it. Letter 82.⁸

21:21 Teaching Jews to Forsake Moses

The Patience and Perseverance of the Apostles.

Severus of Antioch: Thus the apostles and the holy disciples of the Savior, in the beginning, allowed converts from Judaism to the life of the gospel to be circumcised according to the law of Moses in order that they would just believe in the Lord. Later, they themselves on their own, filled with worship in the Spirit and with evangelical perfection, rejected the small shadowy observances of the law. Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 21.21–22.⁹

21:26 Paul Purified Himself and Went into the Temple

Paul Condescends to the Jew's Sensibilities.

Chrysostom: Against this Paul defends himself and shows that he does this not of his choice. How did they persuade him? It was part of the divine plan and condescension on his part. So this was no hindrance to the preaching, since it was they themselves who decided such things. So he does not accuse Peter in any way. For what he himself did here is what Peter did on that occasion when he held his peace and established his doctrine. ¹⁰ And he did not say, “But why? It is not necessary to teach those among the Gentiles.” It is not enough that he does not preach so there; he had to do something more to persuade them that you observe the law. Condescension is what it is. Do not be alarmed. Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 46.¹¹