

Friends, don't get me wrong. By no means do I count myself as an expert in all of this, but I've got my eyes on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

Philippians 3:13-14 The Message Bible

First Love Ministries, Inc.

Prayer Study #249

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

CHAPTER 21

Tyre: Paul Is Warned About Jerusalem

1. Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos, the following day to Rhodes and from there to Patara.
2. And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail.
3. When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo.
4. And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.
5. When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed.
6. When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.

Wherever Paul went, there were Christians there to welcome him. What I believe we will see even more strongly in the days to come is how the Christian community is like a family, and wherever we, as believers in Christ, go, we will be welcomed in people's churches and homes, even in foreign lands. In fact, as I have stated before, I believe the big divide between people will no longer be between races or denominations but between non-believers and true believers.

Here Paul gets another warning not to go to Jerusalem. Yet Paul would not be moved from the will of God. The Holy Spirit knew that the Jews would not accept Paul's testimony, but the Lord apparently wanted Paul to give the Jews in Jerusalem a chance to accept the Gospel. The Lord knew that in a few years the Temple would be destroyed completely and the Jews would be scattered to the four corners of the earth "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 19:41-44 & Luke 21:20-24).

Would you like to have been a part of that prayer meeting on the shore? Here in this house there was a day when we use to pray together every time we gathered for any reason, before we departed one from another.

Caesarea: Agabus's Prediction

7. And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day.
8. On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.
9. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.
10. And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.
11. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews of Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"
12. Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.
13. Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."
14. So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."
15. And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem.
16. Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.

Caesarea is the beautiful seaside town built by Herod the Great and named by him for Caesar Augustus on the Mediterranean Sea. It is between Tel Aviv and Haifa. This was the home of Philip the Evangelist, not the disciple, and one of the seven men chosen as a deacon. He was the one who led the Ethiopian to Christ, thus opening up a whole nation to the Gospel. It is interesting to note that Philip had four daughters who were prophets. Just this one example refutes the false teaching that women are to keep silent in the church and not have a function in the Body of Christ. Paul was a big advocate of women in ministry and praised many women ministers. His teaching about *women keeping silent* is taken out of context. First of all, it refers to wives, not women, and secondly, it refers to the custom of the day where wives sat on different sides from their husbands. Paul was telling

them not to be yelling across the aisle asking their husbands questions during the church service and to keep the children silent. In Christ, according to Paul, *there is neither male nor female* (Galatians 3:28). Women are not second class citizens in the Body of Christ.

We hear much about the *Perfect Storm* that is coming in our day. In this chapter, we see the suspense building as Paul prepares for the storm that will befall him in Jerusalem. First there is the warning, by the Spirit, through the disciples at Tyre. Now there is an even more dramatic warning by the prophet Agabus. Barclay tells us that the Jewish prophets often, when words were inadequate, dramatized their messages. Examples of this include Isaiah 20:3-4; Jeremiah 13:1-11 & 27:2; Ezekiel 4, 5:1-4; and 1st Kings 11:29-31. Agabus uses this method to get the point across.

Agabus' prophetic word so moved the people, even Paul's close companions, that they begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but he was resolved and would not be persuaded. Finally, Paul's companions ceased trying to persuade him, and they go on to Jerusalem.

In the traditional King James Version, verse 15 says, "We took up our carriages and went up to Jerusalem." That might sound like Paul and his companions rode a carriage from Caesarea to Jerusalem. According to Barclay, in the sixteenth century English, which the King James Version was written in, *carriage* did not mean something which carried people but meant something which people had to carry. We would have used the word *baggage*.

Mnason of Cyprus is described as an early disciple or what we would call an old disciple. Some believe he was converted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost. Others believe he was one of the Jews sent out by the Lord Himself before the Resurrection.

Paul Conforms to Jewish Customs

17. And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.
18. On the following day Paul went in with us to James and all the elders were present.
19. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.
20. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads 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 teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.

22. "What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.
23. "Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow.
24. "Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.
25. But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and declared that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."
26. Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

Paul and his companions arrive in Jerusalem and are received by James and the Elders of the Church at Jerusalem there. This James is identified as the brother of Jesus, although some denominations believe that Mary had no other children except Jesus and remained a virgin all her life. We do know that the word *brother* in scripture often really means *cousin*, so we really cannot rule this view completely out. This is also the James who wrote the book of James and was not the disciple James. He was killed by the Scribes and Pharisees, who cast him down from the pinnacle of the Temple. This did not kill him so they stoned him. This also did not kill him so they beat him with a club (Matthew 4:5 and Luke 4:9) until he died a martyr's death. He was known as the Man with Camel Knees because he spent so much time on his knees in prayer.

Paul relates how the Gentiles had come to Jesus, and the Jews elders are pleased but also bring up a problem. Rumors have been spread that Paul has encouraged and taught Jewish believers to forsake the Mosaic Law. This was not true, although Paul did teach that the Jewish law was irrelevant for Gentiles, but he never tried to pull the Jews away from the teachings of Moses.

In order to remedy the problem, the elders ask Paul to go through the Mosaic rituals as proof that he is a good Jew. Four men were in the middle of observing a Nazirite vow. This was a vow taken in gratitude for some blessing. They were to abstain from meat and wine for thirty days, not cut their hair, spend the last seven days of the vow in the Temple courts, offer certain offerings (a lamb offering for sin, a ram for a peace offering, etc.).

Finally in the end they were to cut their hair and burn it on the altar with the sacrifice. This was costly and many could not afford it. So it was considered an act of piety for a wealthier person to cover the expenses of someone taking this vow. Paul was asked to cover the expenses for all four of these men, and he agreed to do it so that everyone could see that he was an observer of the Jewish law. He himself agreed to go through the purification rituals.

Paul believed that all these rituals had been fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 10). He did not believe that they counted to God anymore. He was following his principle, however, of “becoming as a Jew to the Jews that he might win the Jew.” [*And unto the Jews I became as a Jew that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law...And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker of it with you.* 1st Corinthians 9:20 and 22]

Paul’s Arrest

27. Now when the seven days were almost ended, 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 teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also 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, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)
30. And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.
31. Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.
32. He immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.
33. Then the commander came near and took him and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done.
34. And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks.

35. When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob.
36. For the multitude of people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"
37. Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek?"
38. "Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out in to the wilderness?"
39. But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."
40. So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language saying:

The final seven days of the vow and purification were almost over when some Jews from Asia, who had come for the feast of Pentecost, recognized Paul. They accused him of bringing an Ephesian, Trophimus, a Gentile, into the Temple, thus defiling the Temple. (He had not done this. There is no evidence that Trophimus ever went in the restricted area of the Temple.) Gentiles could go into the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple but no further. They even had a sign that said that no one of alien race was to enter any further in the Temple, or they would be killed for this crime. The Romans knew the Jews took this Jewish law so seriously that the Romans actually did allow the Jews to kill anyone who violated it.

Paul was very near to being put to death. The thing that saved him was the fact that Rome insisted on civil order and would crush a riot and condemn the commander of the Roman cohort of 1000 men who allowed this. In the confusion the commander could not find out why the mob was taking Paul. To save his own skin, he had Paul arrested and chained by each arm to two soldiers and carried into the Roman barracks. Then the commander allows him to speak to the Jewish mob.

The King of Who I Am

Tanya Goodman and Michael Sykes

My days are filled with laughter, My heart has
known Your peace.

I've travelled far, still there is far to go. 'Cause
in my heart there is a longing,
To look upon your face.

Where You are is where I want to be.

Every road I've travelled down, You have
walked before me.

Made the light to shine out of darkness.
I am looking for the day when I bow before
You,

Lay my crowns at Your feet.

CHORUS

You are My King; You are the Lamb; Lion of
Judah, Seed of Abraham,
The Holy One, God's only Son.
You are the King of who I am.