

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 21:1-14 | Session 60 | Paul is Warned | A.D. 60

Leaving the elders from Ephesus in Miletus, the Apostle Paul wraps up his third missionary journey as he continued to travel toward Jerusalem, first stopping in Tyre, and Caesarea.

Verses 1-3—

By giving us a detailed historical record of the journey, Luke, the author of Acts shows us that what we are reading is about actual places on the map. It helps us visualize the journey and brings the journey more to life. Looking at the map we can see Cyprus to the left and we discover Paul and his company were on a cargo ship which **unlade her burden at Tyre**.

Verse 4,5—

Finding disciples, most likely Jewish believers, but had some been Gentiles it does not change the narrative. These disciples warned Paul **through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem**. Here we have our first problem in today's passage that we should take a moment and try to figure out. As we will see later Paul **went up to Jerusalem** (vs. 15). Was Paul being disobedient to the Holy Spirit? If this is the Holy Spirit telling these men to warn Paul not to go to Jerusalem, then we would have to say "Yes, Paul was disobedient and he got what was coming to him." But I would be hard pressed to say Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ was disobedient; so we have to look for another interpretation. The word **through** in Greek is *dia*. It means, **through**, but it can also be translated as, *by reason of*.. Is it possible these disciples were warning by *reason of the Holy Spirit's prior witness to Paul*, in 20:23, **the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide...** The disciples, likely aware of this, are just reaffirming to Paul what the Holy Spirit has warned him about. "Paul, you know what the Spirit has said and because of that, why are you putting yourself in danger and going to Jerusalem? You shouldn't go!" In other words, it is not the Spirit telling Paul not to go, rather the disciples using the reasoning of the Spirit's witness to try and stop him. Later in verse 11 we will see Paul is warned again, but it is not the Spirit who tells him not to go, rather, again, it is the disciples who try and stop him. Whichever way we interpret it, Paul **kneeled down and the shore, and prayed**, then he uses his free will, does what he wants, and what he thinks is best, and goes (See 20:24). We will look at this more later in the passage, but as a side note: Don't use this verse as a teaching on how we should pray (e.g. kneeling). Likewise, there isn't a lot in Scripture on how a believer in the body of Christ is to pray. Often teaching on prayer is simply made up. Bottom line: Don't make a doctrine out of an historical event.

Verses 6,7—

Continuing south via **ship** they make their way to Ptolemais for **one day** and then down to Caesarea.

Verses 8,9—

Entered the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven (see more on Philip, Acts 6:1-7; 8:5-8; 8:26-40). In 1 Corinthians 13:8 Paul writes that one day prophecies *shall fail*. This account in Acts is likely A.D. 60 and there were still prophecies, by both male and female (1 Corinthians 11:5). Phillip had **four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy**. That is all we know. (I wonder why Cornelius is not mentioned?)

Verse 10-12—

A certain Prophet, named Agabus...was come unto us. There is an Agabus in 11:28 who prophesied about a famine. This is likely the same Prophet. Here, he does not prophesy that Paul should NOT go to Jerusalem, rather that **the Jews shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles**. It is the disciples (understandably so) who don't want Paul to go. We never read of God telling Paul whether he should go or whether he shouldn't. The facts are laid before him, and Paul had to make a decision. Later in 23:11 Paul's decision was approved by the Lord. This appears to be the way God works today in the dispensation of grace. We have freedom to make choices; where we will work, who we will marry, where we will live, what church we will attend, etc. In the dispensation of grace, we don't wait around for a prophecy, or a bright light from heaven. We weigh all the evidence (and we have God's word to help guide us) and the risks, and then like Paul, we move forward. We may have to make adjustments along the way, or live with choices we make, but the freedom we have in Christ allows this.

Verse 13—

Paul does not disregard their warnings, rather his *heart is broken* due to their warnings and their *weeping* for him not to go. He shares his heart with them, **I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for** (on behalf of) **the name of the Lord Jesus** See Acts 9:16).

Verse 14—

The will of the Lord be done, in other words, we are leaving it in God's hands. We have to say that often. While we have freedom, ultimately, we have to trust God that, come what may, in the end he is in control. We can look back and see His hand in our life.

Verse 15—

We...went up to Jerusalem. The word **carriages**, i.e., *to carry one's goods, or to pack up and provide for a way of carrying it*. They are welcomed when they arrive in Jerusalem and **the brethren received us gladly**. Those in Jerusalem are certainly happy to see Paul and everything seems to be going well, but that is all about to change in our passage next week.