

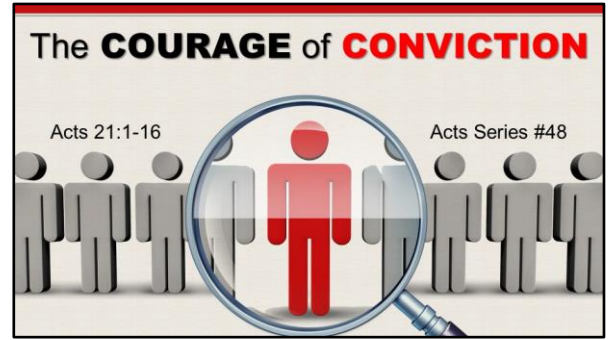
# ACTSFACTS

C@G Supplementary Study Notes for ACTS

## Message #48

### “THE COURAGE OF CONVICTION”

(Acts 21:1-16)

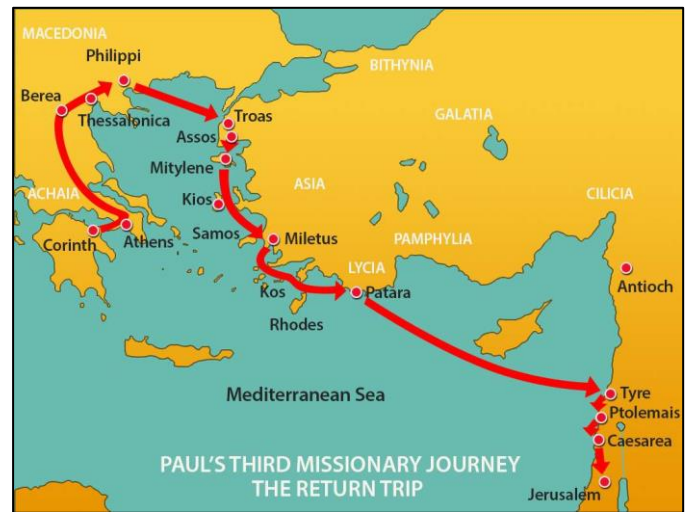


In Acts 21, Paul’s ministry takes on a different character. The beginning of this chapter concludes Paul’s third missionary journey and begins the final phase of his life.

Paul is on a mission to arrive in Jerusalem prior to Pentecost (20:16). Luke continues to describe the journey there in the beginning of this chapter. Paul and Luke left the Ephesian elders (after their emotional farewell) and travelled, most likely on a small cargo ship) along the coastline (21:1). After a few stops, they then proceeded to take a larger cargo ship southeast toward the region of Phoenicia (v 2-3). The ship docks in Tyre for seven days.

During this week, Paul and Luke spend time fellowshiping with Christians already in the city (20:4). The Christians in Tyre were there as a result of the believers fleeing from Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 11:19), an act that was approved of by none other than Paul (then known as Saul)! Now they are meeting as brothers in Christ!

**Why do you think it was important for Paul to meet with fellow Christians along his journey?**



The word “sought” is an emphatic word and implies that Paul and Luke actively and with effort looked for, and found, these believers so as to have fellowship together.

**What do you think are some reasons that Christians today seem less inclined to “seek out” fellow believers for fellowship?**

**What are some risks/dangers for the believer who does not meet with other believers?**

Luke continues on to record an interesting detail about Paul’s stay in Tyre, writing that the believers “through the Spirit....were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem” (20:4).

This presents something of a challenge to the reader.....

We know from Acts 20:22-23 that it is the Holy Spirit who is leading Paul to Jerusalem. Yet now these Christians seem to be proclaiming a different message from the Spirit.

Does the Spirit contradict Himself? No. Is Paul being disobedient to the Spirit? No.

1. Firstly, the term “through the Spirit” is rather inconclusive.
2. Secondly, Paul had lived a life sensitive to the Spirit’s leading (see Acts 16:6-7 and 16:9-10). There is no reason for him to stop now.
3. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit has never prohibited Paul from going to Jerusalem. Rather, it is His plan (20:22).
4. Fourthly, Paul describes his mission to Jerusalem as the ministry received from Jesus (20:24). The Holy Spirit would not forbid Paul to do something that Jesus had commanded.
5. Paul is able to declare that he had followed God in good conscience (23:1)...he could not do that if he had been disobedient to God’s Spirit.

**These predictions and prophecies should be seen, not as prohibitions, but as a further preparation for what lies ahead for Paul.**

**Have you ever been warned that something you were about to do could be dangerous? How did you feel? What did you do?**

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**Has there ever been a time in your life when your leading from the Holy Spirit seems to be at odds with other people's view of what is the right thing for you to do? How did you work through this confusion?**

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**How would you explain the difference between being "single-minded" and being "narrow-minded"?**

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So Luke continues on in his narrative to describe how they sailed from Tyre down to Ptolemais (where they again met with fellow believers) and then on to Caesarea (the port for Jerusalem some 100kms away). Here, the travelling missionary team end their travel by boat. And, here, they find accommodation with Phillip, the deacon-evangelist (Acts 6:5; 8:4f). Again, Phillip was "forced" out of Jerusalem as a result of the persecution of Saul/Paul. Now, some 20 years later, the one-time persecutor was reunited with one of the persecuted! How amazing is God's grace!

Phillip has four daughters, all unmarried and all with a prophetic ministry. As the ties to the male-dominated Judaism weaken, a meaningful opportunity for women to be involved in ministry is made possible. Luke does not tell us that these daughters of Phillip prophesied over Paul...but he does record the experience of someone who does.....Agabus.

Agabus had a well-known and tested prophetic ministry (see Acts 11:28). On this occasion he illustrates his prophetic words with a dramatic visual aid – Paul's belt. Through this prophetic object lesson, it was again revealed that Paul would be bound and imprisoned in Jerusalem.

As a result of this alarming prophecy, Luke (and other members of Paul's team..."we" 21:12) and all the people tried to talk Paul out of going on to Jerusalem. But Paul is absolutely determined to go. He is not only ready to be arrested but, if necessary, to die (21:13). When everyone realised that Paul could not be persuaded to give up his trip to Jerusalem, they stepped back and said, "The Lord's will be done".

**How would you describe the difference between being determined and being stubborn?**

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**How do you think those observing Paul were affected by his singlemindedness?**

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**Think of a person you know, or are aware of, who is focused on radical obedience to God. How are you affected by his/her obedience?**

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**How does Paul's example of courage and conviction in the face of upcoming persecution encourage you in your life?**

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We are caught up in a major battle of priorities that will affect and dictate how we will live.

**Comfort, Convenience and Complacency.....or.....Conviction, Compassion and Courage.**

Paul could say:

*"I am crucified with Christ...and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me". (Galatians 2:20)*

And:

*"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain..." (Philippians 1:21)*

**How do your priorities compare and contrast with those of Paul?**

**Do you think it is possible for someone to be as committed to Jesus today as Paul was?**