

History in the Making
“Understanding the Book of Acts-Part Thirty-Five

Introduction: Last week—Paul’s emotional farewell to the elders in Ephesus. Now—final trek to and experience in Jerusalem.

Review Paul’s plans and itinerary: (see map)

- ✓ In Ephesus but determined to go to Jerusalem

When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome. Acts 19:21 NKJV

- ✓ Departed for Macedonia/then to Greece for 3 months
- ✓ Philippi, Troas, Miletus, Assos, Mitylene
- ✓ Samos/Miletus-Greeted elders of Ephesus

For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 20:16 NKJV

- ✓ On his way to Jerusalem (21:1-14)

I. Final trek to Jerusalem (21:1-14)

A. Short visit at Tyre (1-6)

1. Tore themselves away from Ephesian elders
2. Three ports along the way
 - a. Cos-famous for medical school and founded by Hippocrates (Hippocratic Oath)
 - b. Harbor of Rhodes
 - c. Patara—Roman governor of Lycia had headquarters here.

NOTE: Found there, a ship that would take them close to their next destination

3. Landed at Tyre
 - a. Necessary to spend a week-ships cargo had to be discharged

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- b. Found the Christian church there
- c. Some had spirit of prophecy—discouraged him from going

Issue: Paul didn't listen. Was he disobeying the Spirit?

- ✓ Natural that friends who by the Spirit saw that he was to suffer, would try to talk him out of going.
- ✓ Had happened before

And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. Acts 20:22-23 NKJV

- ✓ But his commitment was to Spirit who called him
- ✓ Counsel of godly friends still passes through lens of fear and prejudice
- ✓ Like Jesus-Luke 9:51—face was set to go to Jerusalem

- d. Even though NOT old friends, the bond of Christ's love so formed in a week that they hated to see Paul go!

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. Acts 21:5-6 NKJV

(ILL) Cultivating that kind of love, depth, concern for one another in the body of Christ today.

NOTE ALSO: Global nature of the church (1 week in Ecuador)

B. Tyre to Caesarea (map)

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 at 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." Acts 21:7-14 NKJV

1. Stayed one day in Ptolemais (v. 7)
2. At Caesarea stayed with Philip
 - a. One of seven Hellenists deacons appointed in Acts 6
 - b. Did missionary work in Samaria-led Ethiopian Enoch to Christ (Acts 8)
 - c. 4 daughters who prophesied (ministry for women early on)

NOTE: Nothing said of actual prophesies-tomb of Philip/daughters in Hierapolis

3. Prophecy of Agabus (10-14)

- a. Earlier appearance of Agabus

And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. 30 This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Acts 11:27-30 NKJV

- b. Tied himself up with Paul's belt

Compare:

"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; Mark 10:33 NKJV

- c. All tried to persuade Paul "we"-even Luke did
- d. Paul's resolve

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." Acts 21:13-14 NKJV

NOTE: Like Jesus in Gethsemane-"the will of the Lord be done..."

TRUTH: Suffering for the right reason is commendable

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. 1 Peter 4:15-16 NKJV

II. Greeting and Challenge in Jerusalem (21:15-26)

A. After several days in Caesarea set out for the last leg—64 miles journey to Jerusalem

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. 17 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. Acts 21:15-17 NKJV

B. Meeting with elders in Jerusalem (17-26)

1. Rejoiced over God's work among the Gentiles

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. Acts 21:18-20a NKJV

- a. James had stayed as elder in Jerusalem
- b. Brother of Jesus-Peter—John had gone elsewhere
- c. James, Peter, John—pillars of the church-Galatians 2:10
- d. James—a large house to accommodate all elders and Paul with his entourage

2. But still troubled by reports

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. Acts 21:20b-22 NKJV

- a. Reports that Paul not only told Gentiles they didn't need to keep Jewish customs
- b. But he also discouraged Jews to do so
- c. They know you are here and will want a meeting

NOTE: Paul's position of flexibility is well documented

— Special Days

*For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. 5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. **Romans 14:2-6 NKJV***

— Circumcision:

- ✓ How it can't save

*Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. 3 And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. 4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. **Galatians 5:2-4 NKJV***

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. **Galatians 5:6 NKJV***

- ✓ Avoided offense to make Gospel primary

*For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; 20 and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; 22 to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23 Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. 1 **Corinthians 9:19-23 NKJV***

NOTE: The rumors were not true. Had not told Jews to forsake the law—must be careful we don't distort people's teaching

C. Request of elders as conciliatory actions

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 decided 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." Acts 21:23-25 NKJV

1. Wanted Paul to take part in one of ancestral customs-they would believe he was still an observant and practicing Jew.
 - a. 30 day Nazarite vow
 - b. Make the offering that they do
 - c. Will know rumors are false
2. First he would have to be purified-having ministered to Gentiles
3. But for Gentiles-they uphold the council ruling of Genesis 15

D. Paul accepted their suggestion

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. Acts 21:26 NKJV

Lessons? Did Paul compromise?

- ✓ He was indeed all things to all men
- ✓ Great latitude/freedom in Christianity when it comes to local customs
- ✓ Freedom used only to promote the Gospel and foster unity

III. Riot and Arrest in Jerusalem (27-40)

A. Paul seized by Jews

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

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together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. Acts 21:27-30 NKJV

1. Had almost finished his requirement
2. Riot ensues-he is arrested
 - a. Asian Jews-Envious-hated him
 - b. There for feast of Pentecost
3. Assumed he had violated
4. Sadness of verse 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. Acts 21:30 NKJV

Gospel/Preacher finally kicked out-now it's ready for what Jesus predicted-AD 70

"These things which you see — the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down." Luke 21:6 NKJV

Paul will never return to Jerusalem to minister

B. Rescued by the Romans

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 the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!" Acts 21:31-36 NKJV

(In the outer court)

1. Romans insisted on justice
2. Arrested him and carried him away

C. Paul asks to address the Jews

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 into 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. Acts 21:37-40 NKJV

1. Accusation-false Messiah-4,000 followed (Egyptians)
2. AD 54

Conclusions—Lessons

1. Danger of spiritual arrogance and religiosity (blind/evil)
2. Power of Christ imparted compassion

For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. 13 For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. 14 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 2 Corinthians 5:12-14 NKJV

3. Beauty of supernatural approval—crowd quieted to hear the gospel