

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 21

We are in the portion of the book of Acts where Paul is concluding his 3rd missionary journey and for the past couple of Wednesday night's we have seen him make his way toward Jerusalem.

You might remember that as he visited the churches in Macedonia and in Greece, he took up a collection to help the poor in Jerusalem –

And I mentioned last week, that from the time he left the Philippi – he was on a tight schedule, where he had 50 days to get to Jerusalem before the Day of Pentecost –

That is why he bypassed the city of Ephesus, and he stayed in Miletus – where he gathered the elders of Ephesus and shared with them his characteristics of ministry.

And we studied the words of exhortation he provided them in our study last week.

So, Paul wants to get to Jerusalem because he brings aid

He needs to get to Jerusalem because he wants to observe the feast there

But there is another reason that Paul wants to return to Jerusalem

You see, from the time of his conversion, Paul wanted to share the gospel to his fellow Jew.

And after spending a few years sharing it amongst the gentiles – he sees this as his last opportunity to share it among his people.

Church, the more and more we look at the life of Paul – the more we have an example of someone who was determined to do what God had called him to do – no matter what.

Let's pray...

[Act 21:1-14 NKJV] 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.

I had you make a note of the phrase “when we had departed from them”

The “them”, of course, is in reference to the elders of Ephesus that had gathered there in Miletus.

The word that Luke uses here in the Greek – is a word that implies that Paul and the elders had to be forcefully separated.

Remember, Paul had poured his life and love in to these leaders in Ephesus.

We saw at the end of our study last week that Luke points out that all the elders fell on Paul's neck and kissed him as he was saying his goodbyes.

So we see the elders' love for Paul in return – no one wants to see him leave. They want him to stay, so Luke lets know how hard it was for Paul to leave the elders behind – knowing that he will probably never see them again.

Now, Luke here is providing a travel log as they make their way down the present day Turkish coast.

Most of these cities are a day's journey from one another – 20-30 miles.

So, we see Paul and the guys island hopping their way down the coast.

This tells us that during this time Paul and the guys were traveling via a smaller boat – these were boats that usually only traveled during the day time – as they moved goods from one port to the next.

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.

(Show map)

So once they arrive in Patara – Paul and the guys finally find a 747 kind of ship that will travel the 400 miles to Tyre – a city in Phoenicia.

Now, because they got on this much bigger boat as they made their way across the Mediterranean Sea – this meant that the boat was carrying much more cargo than the previous boats they were on – and therefore it meant that once they got to each port, it would take much longer to unload and load the boat.

So Luke tells us that they traveled the 400 miles and landed in Tyre of Phoenicia.

Turn with me to the left to chapter 11 –

[Act 11:19 NKJV] 19 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as **Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.**

Phoenicia was one of the regions that the early persecuted Christians went to as a result of the persecution of the early church in Jerusalem

Now, who was leading the persecution of the early church in Jerusalem? Saul

So here, 27 years later, God has orchestrated a reunion of sorts – some of the same individuals that fled Jerusalem – they are going to receive the one who caused them to leave Jerusalem in the first place.

Church, this shows us just how big our God is and how great our God is that He can restore broken relationships.

And we will see that through the persecution – the gospel spread to Tyre and there was a gathering of believers there.

And so therefore we have another example of Rom 8:28

[Rom 8:28 NKJV] 28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to [His] purpose.

4 And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.

So Paul arrives in Tyre – he knows he is going to be there for a week

That is how long it's going to take the boat to unload and reload –

So what does Paul do?

Does he go sightseeing? No

He goes to look for Christians in Tyre.

He goes to look for the local church.

That is what the word finding means – he sought out.

And when he found them – I had you make a note where it said that they told Paul, through the Spirit, not to go to Jerusalem.

"Paul, the Holy Spirit told us you shouldn't go to Jerusalem"

Turn with me back to chapter 20 –

Look at what Paul told the elders in verse 22-23

[Act 20:22-23 NKJV] 22 "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.

So, Paul tells the elders that the Holy Spirit is in a sense leading him to Jerusalem and here the believers in Tyre are saying that the Holy Spirit is saying don't go to Jerusalem.

Church, the Holy Spirit doesn't contradict itself.

What going on here???

We know that everywhere Paul went the Holy Spirit was telling him through the gift of prophecy that danger awaited him in Jerusalem.

But there is no indication the Holy Spirit was forbidding Paul to go.

A few weeks ago in Acts 16 – we did see the Holy Spirit forbid Paul from preaching in Asia Minor –

But that is not what is happening here.

The prophecies were simply a forewarning but not a prohibition.

The disciples in Tyre tried to dissuade Paul from going.

Why?

They didn't want to see Paul harmed.

But Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem because he knew it was God's will and he was going to be obedient – no matter the cost.

Turn with me to Matt 16 –

Because there is another individual who was on a mission to go to Jerusalem – He also knew that trouble awaited Him there.

[Mat 16:21-23 NKJV] 21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. 22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" 23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

The believers in Tyre – they are like Peter

Don't go to Jerusalem Paul. Stay with us and be safe.

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.

So after 7 days, it is time to say goodbye –

The believers in Tyre know that Paul is determined to go to Jerusalem –

So they accompany Paul with their wives and children and notice that they knelt down on the shore and prayed.

When you bring the whole family to say goodbye you're really saying something about how much you love someone.

But that is how they felt toward Paul -

6 When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home. 7 And when we had finished [our] voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day.

Paul arrives in the next city Ptolemais (tolemayes)

It was a short stay in Ptolemais – 1 day

But notice, Paul gets off the boat and goes directly to look for the brothers and sisters of the town.

And when he finds them – I had you make a note of the word greeted – because the word greeted means to enfold in the arms – We might say that they hugged one another.

Complete strangers – never had met each other and here we find them hugging each other.

Church, there is a love between strangers who are brothers and sisters in Christ because they are saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

If I was to start a new job tomorrow – there is no way I am going to walk in the doors and give my new boss a hug

But if I was to walk into a fellowship of believers – it's a whole different story.

Think about how encouraging it was for Paul and those that traveled with Paul – that every city they came to – they were able to find Christians.

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.

In Acts 6, we were introduced to Philip as one of the deacons of the early church.

He was one of the original seven that were selected to serve tables.

He was one of the seven along with Stephen.

So as we continued our study through the book of Acts, we saw that Philip the deacon became Philip the evangelist.

Because of the persecution of Saul, Philip went to Samaria where he preached to them and revival began to happen in Samaria.

He also preached to the Ethiopian eunuch and baptized him.

And here we see that he has settled in Caesaria –

Now, unlike in Tyre, Paul doesn't have to seek out the believers – he goes directly to Philip's house and stays there.

Think about this – twenty years after Saul had ran Philip out of town, twenty years after Saul was there giving the approval, giving the thumbs up of the stoning of Stephen.

Paul shows up at Philip's house and Philip welcomes him in and shows hospitality to Paul – and they are having fellowship with one another

Church, that is a testament to the transforming power of the Gospel.

9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

Why did the Holy Spirit inspire Luke to include this tidbit about Philip's daughters.

We are told they prophesied – yet in the very next verse, we find that Agabus, a prophet shows up to give Paul a prophetic word.

There are probably a lot of reasons why the Holy Spirit thought it important to record the ministry of these four unmarried ladies.

- One reason that I think is precious is that it would encourage Paul.

Twenty years earlier, as Saul, he had destroyed whole families as he persecuted the church at Jerusalem.

He meant it for evil; but God used it for good.

Phillip's family was proof of God's providence.

- Another reason that I believe that the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to write about Philip's daughters is because it fulfilled prophecy.

Turn to Joel 2 – we are going to look at an Old testament prophecy that Peter referenced in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost as people were filled with the Holy Spirit.

[Joe 2:28-32 NKJV] 28 "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; **Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.** 29 And also on [My] menservants and on [My] maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. 30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into

blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. 32 And it shall come to pass [That] whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

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.'"

So Agabus shows up – now, we have seen Agabus before - This was the man who had prophesied fifteen years earlier about the famine that would hit the world (Acts 11)

So he is a prophet with a proven record.

Now, up to this point, Paul has been receiving a prophetic word in every city he goes about what is going to happen to him in Jerusalem.

Agabus actually provides Paul with a visual message of what awaited him in Jerusalem.

As weird as this is – it was something that was very common in the Old Testament God would send prophets to deliver a message – and sometimes, they would be visual messages.

Turn to Isaiah 20

[Isa 20:1-4 NKJV] 1 In the year that Tartan came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it, 2 at the same time the LORD spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and remove the sackcloth from your body, and take your sandals off your feet." And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. 3 Then the LORD said, "Just as My servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years [for] a sign and a wonder against Egypt and Ethiopia, 4 "so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners and the Ethiopians as captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

So God sends Isaiah to walk around the city naked for 3 years to illustrate how Egypt and Ethiopia would be conquered by Assyria and let away as naked captives.

Ezekiel was another prophet that God had him make a model of the city of Jerusalem out of clay to show the people how the Babylonians were going to conquer Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 4 -

12 Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.

So now, Luke and the rest of the guys – note that Luke includes himself.

When they see Agabus's performance – as he acts out what is going to happen to Paul – they start trying to talk Paul out of going to Jerusalem.

They plead with him not to go.

They loved Paul as their brother and did not want those things to befall him – just like the believers in Tyre.

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."

On the night before Jesus was crucified, He said the following -

[Jhn 13:34 NKJV] 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

We are to love our fellow-Christians as, Christ loved us

Paul loved Christians as his rule of life.

He regularly risked his life for them.

He was running towards danger for the sake of his love for Christians by taking an offering from the Gentile churches to the struggling church at Jerusalem.

Why, then, would he not listen to pretty much every believer who was telling him to abandon his trip?

Because he loved Christ most and it overruled every other love.

His overruling love for Christ is the motive for what he said in verse thirteen.

The word for breaking means weakening.

The concern of the Christians was weakening Paul's resolve to obey the Lord!

He knew that the believers were sincere and cared deeply for his well-being.

But they were focusing on his physical well-being.

He had a spiritual well-being to consider.

And not just his spiritual well-being but theirs, as well.

Their pleading was not helping him; it was hindering him.

However, once they saw that that Paul was determined in his obedience to the Lord – they took the higher path – which is to submit to the will of the Lord

I think that sometimes we too, in our well meaning ways, can discourage people from doing what God has called them to do.

But I think we also need to be careful not to keep them from what God is calling them to do.

Do we want to be prepared to do God's will for our life?

If we do -

Give ourselves to Him, over and over.

We'll then see His will being worked out in our life.

Amen

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

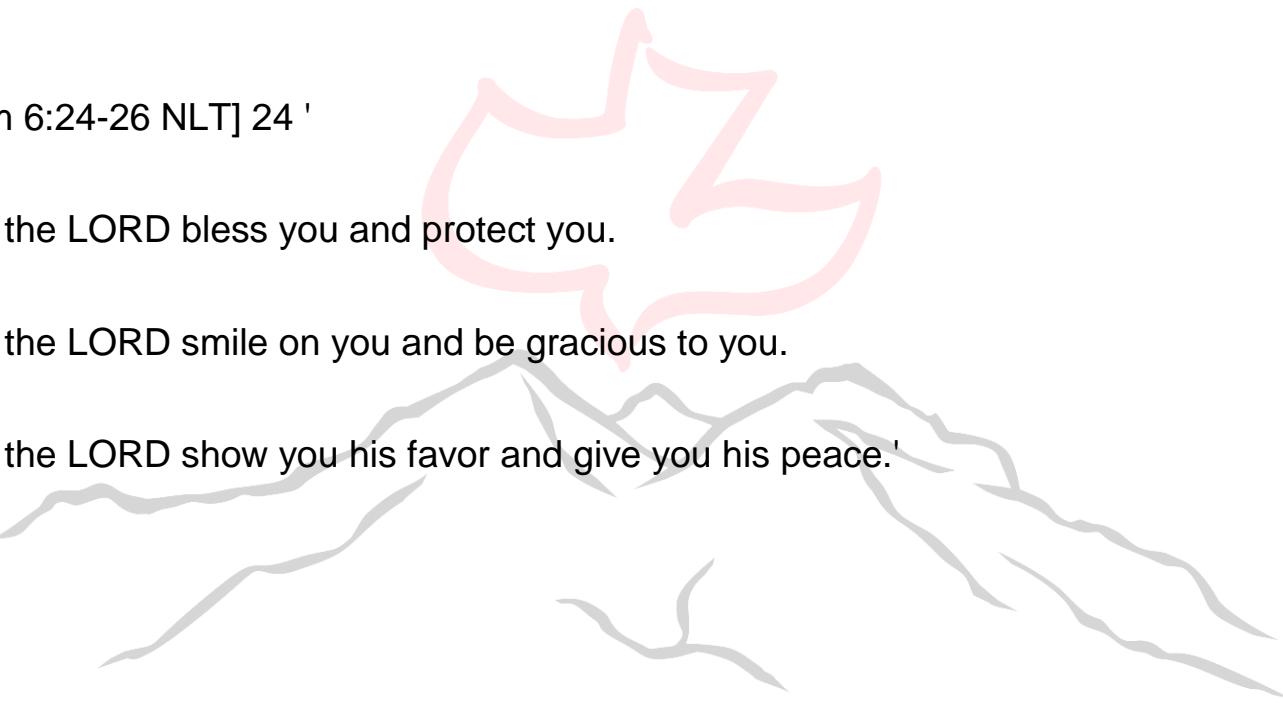
I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'



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