

Acts 21:1-17 – Finishing the Course

Introduction: Paul and the missionary companions are traveling from Miletus (where he addressed the Ephesian elders) to Jerusalem. On the way he will visit Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Ptolemais, and Caesarea. Everyone in Paul's life tries to prevent him from going to Jerusalem. By the way Luke describes the first part, it seems that they were in quite a hurry.

I. Tyrian Believers Try To Dissuade Paul (1-6)

A. Paul Arrives in Tyre (1-4a)

1. They Sail Across the Mediterranean heading home (1-2)
 - a. "gotten from them" (i.e. departed from the Ephesian elders) – the literal rendering would be "after we tore ourselves away"
 - i. Leaving each of the cities in this chapter will prove to be a very emotional event
 - ii. The people in each city knew Paul was probably going to his death
 - b. They sail to Cos
 - c. They sail to Rhodes
 - d. They sail to Patara
 - e. At Patara, they board a ship heading to Phoenicia



2. They Arrive at Tyre (3)
 - a. They sail past the island of Cyprus
 - b. They land in Tyre, a city of Syria
 - i. They land there because the ship was to unload its cargo there
 - ii. They obviously caught a ride with a cargo ship
3. They Stay a Week in Tyre (4a)
 - a. They sought out disciples in Tyre

- i. The word ἀνευροντες (from aneurisko) means “they looked up” disciples
 - ii. This implies that they didn’t necessarily know these disciples already, but looked for brethren when they reached Tyre.
 - iii. The city of Tyre was close to Judea. Jesus’ ministry of healing and preaching attracted people from Phoenicia. It is possible that Jesus’ ministry or the ministry of the Apostles converted some of these believers after the resurrection.
 - b. They stayed seven days with the disciples
 - i. Notice The bond between the brethren (we will see this more in the next few verses)
 - ii. They probably didn’t know each other before this (although they would have surely heard of Paul)
- B. Paul is Advised Against Going to Jerusalem (4b-6)
 - 1. The Tyrian believers Attempt to Dissuade Paul (4b)
 - a. They are said to be speaking through the Spirit
 - i. There is much debate about what this means
 - ii. Were they speaking by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and Paul chose to disregard their warning?
 - iii. In Ch. 20:22, Paul said he was going bound by the Spirit to Jerusalem, has the Spirit now changed his mind?
 - iv. Did Paul not believe they were speaking through the Spirit
 - v. Perhaps the best answer is that they were shown the trials and sufferings by the Spirit and were so shocked by it that they didn’t want Paul to go through with it
 - b. They were telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem
 - i. The imperfect tense of “said” is used [ἐλεγον] signifying they continually said to him. They didn’t just mention it. They were persistent about it.
 - ii. They did not want to see Paul go through suffering and the persecution that was coming
 - iii. It seems like Paul receives their warning but does not allow this to invalidate the fact that the Spirit had already told him to go to Jerusalem. Paul chooses to finish the course rather than listen to the people (even though they are watching out for him)

2. Paul Departs with much Emotion (5-6)
 - a. The families of the believers accompanied Paul and the missionaries as they left the city
 - i. Not only the men accompany them out of the city, but their families as well
 - ii. The scene could not be more emotional.
 - iii. The fellowship had invested themselves in the missionaries and vice versa. If they only knew each other for seven days, this is an amazing display of Christian love.
 - b. They all knelt on the beach and prayed before Paul enters the ship
 - i. They took the opportunity to pray together
 - ii. What do you think they prayed for?
 - iii. Why was important that they pray all together?
 - c. They said farewell to one another
- C. Paul Comes to Ptolemais (7)
 1. The City of Ptolemais is about 27 nautical miles from Tyre (10 hours)
 2. Paul (and company) greets the brethren there
 - a. The word salute (or greet) is ἀσπασάμενοι (aspasamenoi) and it means to embrace, greet, or to enfold in the arms
 - b. The missionaries find believers in every city they visit
 3. Paul is welcomed into their homes
 - a. They stayed with the brethren overnight
- II. The Community Attempts to Dissuade Paul (8-14)
 - A. The Next Day the Missionaries Travel to Caesarea
 - B. The Missionaries come to Phillip's House in Caesarea (8-9)
 1. Paul stays at Phillip the Evangelist's House (8)
 - a. Philip the Evangelist
 - i. This is the Philip from Acts 8 that took the gospel to the Samaritans and converted the Ethiopian Eunuch
 - ii. His ministry and life evidently became known as he is called "the evangelist"
 - iii. This also distinguishes him from Phillip the Apostle
 - b. Philip, one of the seven
 - i. He is also know for being one of the seven "deacons" chosen in Acts 6 to "serve tables"
 - ii. We last saw Phillip in Caesarea in Acts 8:40 – he must have settled there. (Probably around 20 years earlier)
 - iii. Do you remember Phillip's close associate who was killed? Stephen...remember who stood by

holding the cloaks of his murderers? I wonder what this visit between the two was like.

2. Phillip had four unmarried daughters (9)

- a. They are said to be virgins because they are unmarried but of marrying age. Their virginity has nothing to do with their gift.
- b. They are said to prophesy
 - i. This is a fulfillment of Acts 2:17 as Peter quotes Joel 2:28 - And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:
 - ii. The word prophesy here is a present active participle which probably means they engaged in the activity rather than holding the office of prophet
 - iii. Luke gives no attention to the daughters other than saying they prophesied. We are told about none of their prophecies or their activities in the community
 - iv. It seems that Luke is simply telling us the unity and inclusion of all segments of society in the church.

C. The Warning of The Coming Trials (10-14)

1. Agabus Arrives bringing a Dire Prophecy (10-11)

- a. Agabus comes down from Judea
 - i. This is not the first time we have seen Agabus in Acts
 - ii. He appears in Acts 11:27-28, where he prophesied about a famine during Claudius' reign. (He is always full of bad news)
- b. Agabus takes Paul's belt (sash) and binds himself
 - i. He acts out his prophecy the way many OT prophets did (See 1 Ki. 11:29-39; Isa. 20:2-4; Ezekiel 4:1-3)
 - ii. This was no doubt an awkward moment in the assembly
- c. Agabus announces that the Holy Spirit says the Jews will bind the owner of the belt
- d. Agabus announces that he will be turned over to the Gentiles
 - i. The Jews could arrest people and give them 40 lashes minus one but they could not execute anyone without Rome's approval

- ii. Paul was a Roman citizen so the Jews had no authority except the authority Rome provided
- 2. Paul is Determined to Finish the Course (12-14)
 - a. All the Brethren Try to Dissuade Paul (12)
 - i. Now all the people (even his own companions) try to keep him from going into Jerusalem
 - ii. Notice that everyone has now told Paul not to go
 - In 20:37, the Ephesian elders warned him
 - In 21:4, the believers at Tyre warned him
 - Now everyone, including his own party, warned him not to go
 - Many people would have taken the hint
 - b. Paul Refuses to be Persuaded away from his journey (13)
 - i. Paul is emotionally taxed by the believers continued pressure
 - He asks, "What are you doing"
 - They are breaking his heart – they are causing him grief and wearing down his resolve
 - No doubt he loved them all and didn't want to see them hurting, but he also knew he had a mission to complete
 - Paul is deeply emotionally strained by the counsel of all the believers
 - ii. Paul is ready to suffer and die if necessary
 - Paul knows the Spirit is leading him to Jerusalem
 - Paul is willing to suffer and die "for the name of Jesus"
 - He is willing to really follow Jesus – through suffering, trial, humiliation, and even death
 - c. The Brethren Resolve to Accept God's Will (14)
- D. Paul Continues the Course to Jerusalem (15-17)
 - 1. Paul stays with a Disciple in Jerusalem (15-16)
 - a. Paul goes to Jerusalem with some from Caesarea (15-16a)
 - b. Paul comes to stay with Mnason, an early disciple (16b)
 - i. Mnason is a Jew from Cyprus living in Jerusalem
 - ii. He is an old disciple (meaning how long he has been a disciple, not his age) – probably converted after the resurrection or during the Apostles' witness in Jerusalem
 - 2. Paul is received gladly by the brethren in Jerusalem (17)