

Part 52 Paul Headed to Jerusalem

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, Oct. 05, 2016

† Acts 21:1-14

We pick back up in our story from 2 Wednesdays ago with Paul boarding a ship in Miletus after he had met with the Elders of the Church of Ephesus with a tearful goodbye.

1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

Luke says that “we” were gotten from “them.” The “them” would have been the Elders from Ephesus who would have stayed behind and returned back to Ephesus. The “we” would have been Paul, Luke, Timothy, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, and Trophimus. All of these men were accompanying Paul during this time of taking the financial gifts from Macedonia and Achaia to the Church in Jerusalem. They leave Miletus and set sail toward Jerusalem. The first place they stop is an Island called Coos, which was about 50 miles away from Miletus. They stay the night in Coos and then the next day they sail to another Greek Island named Rhodes, which was about 50 miles from Coos. Then they sail another 50 miles to the mainland in Turkey to a place called Patara.

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

It is not known why they changed ships in Patara, most likely it was because they needed to get on a larger ship that was heading toward Jerusalem because they needed to travel another 400 miles. Or maybe the ship they were on was not going any further than Patara. Either way, they board a different ship and set sail toward Jerusalem.

Remember, Paul is in a hurry to get there as we read in **Acts 20:16:** **For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.**

So, he is going to get on whichever ship will get him there the quickest.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

They sail past Cyprus, not even stopping there. They kept on sailing into Syria and finally landed at Tyre where the ship would be unloaded of whatever cargo it was carrying. Tyre was a large shipping port where many ships would come in and load and unload. It was like the Fedex hub in Memphis. Tyre is still about 100 miles from Jerusalem.

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

While they are in Tyre they come across other believers and they spent 7 days there with them. It most likely took 7 days for their ship to be unloaded and then reloaded with cargo before it could set sail again. They didn't have Uber back then so they have to wait on their ride.

Notice that these believers in Tyre warned Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. It says “**through the Spirit,**” they told him this. Now, a lot of people have a hard time with this because it appears that the Holy Spirit is telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem, yet we

know that he does indeed go to Jerusalem. Was Paul disobeying the Holy Spirit? Is that how we should interpret this? No, I don't think so. If you look up the Greek word for the English word “**through,**” as used here, it comes from the Greek word, “**dia**” (*dee-ah*) which is a preposition which is often used to mean, “**on account of.**” So, the way I understand it, the Holy Spirit has revealed to these disciples in Tyre of the great danger that Paul is going to face in Jerusalem. So with that information they naturally are trying to protect Paul and tell him that “**he should not go up to Jerusalem.**” I'm pretty sure that is what is happening here, because the Holy Spirit has not forbidden Paul to go to Jerusalem. Paul is following the Spirit in this journey and would not go against Him.

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. 6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

All of the believers in Tyre along with their families escort Paul and his men to the ship as they depart. This must have been another very touching scene. The short 7 days that they had been there with them had produced a strong bond. Believers have things in common. As a Christian we should be able to fellowship with other believers no matter where we may be.

I had to go on a business trip this past year to a place in South Carolina and go into a technical center I had never been before. I didn't know anyone there. The manager that took me around the facility didn't know me and I didn't know him but through our conversation we discovered that we were both Christians. From that time on we shared fellowship with each other. We exchanged information and talked about our Churches. I told him how I pastored this Church and he told me how he played in a Church worship band. For the brief 2 hours we were together we shared our faith and fellowship. That is what Paul and his men have been doing for the past 7-days so they have gotten really close to these believers in Tyre.

They pray together on the seashore and then they board their ship to set sail to Jerusalem.

7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

They arrive in the seaport town of Ptolemais which is in Galilee, the home place of the Lord Jesus. They meet up with some fellow believers there and stay with them for a day.

8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

The next morning Paul and his men leave Ptolemais and head to Caesarea. This Caesarea is Caesarea of Palestine, not Caesarea of Philippi. If it was Caesarea of Philippi it would be distinguished as such as we find in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark: **Matthew 16:13: When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?**

Mark 8:27: And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

So they are at Caesarea in Palestine where Philip the Evangelist has a home. We read in Acts chapter 8, right after the account of the Ethiopian Eunuch that the Bible says this: **Acts 8:40:** But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

Philip also had 4 daughters which the Bible tells us were virgins and they did prophesy. This verse has given a lot of people trouble as well. The word “prophesy” can be used in two senses;

1. As we normally think of, someone that God has given the supernatural ability to foretell future events.
2. Someone who teaches or proclaims the Word of God.

We know in the Old Testament that a prophet was a foreteller of future events. And, in the Bible there are women that are called “Prophetess.” Including: Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Noadiah, and Anna. And of course the Bible says Jezebel called herself one. I am of the belief that here in the days of the early New Testament Church when the sign gifts were still being used and needed, that this gift of being a prophetess was still around and these 4-Virgin daughters of Philip had this gift. I don’t see any reason to believe otherwise. The Bible does not tell us what they were prophesying but simply says they “did prophesy.”

This would also line up with Scripture such as in **Acts 2:17:** 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:

Which was of course referring to **Joel 2:28-29:** And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

So, I understand it to mean that these daughters of Philip had the gift of prophecy.

10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

While they are staying at Philip’s house, the Prophet Agabus shows up again. He is mentioned 2 times in the Bible, here and back in **Acts 11:27-28:** And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

We see in Agabus’ first prophecy that the Bible says that it came to pass, so there is no question that this guy is a legitimate Prophet that foretells future events. Now he has obviously been sent by the Holy Spirit to warn Paul of what is going to become of him when he goes into Jerusalem.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

I like Agabus, he is like one of the Old Testament Prophets such as Elijah or Elisha, who often used symbols such as this when prophesying. He tells Paul that the Holy Ghost has told him that the man that owneth this girdle, the Jews shall deliver him

into the hands of the Gentiles. The Gentiles would be the Romans. Well, as we will see next week, this prophecy actually comes true: **Acts 21:33:** Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

Everyone listening tried to persuade Paul not to go to Jerusalem because of this prediction. They are of course concerned about his well-being, which is natural. You would try to keep someone from falling into harm if you knew they were going to. Can you imagine the pressure that this was putting on Paul?

You must remember that at the very beginning of Paul’s calling into the Gospel ministry, the Lord said that Paul would suffer greatly. When he came to Ananias in Damascus he told him this: **Acts 9:15-16:** But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

This is a very tender statement by Paul. You see, his mind is already set and it cannot be changed but he is sensitive to the feelings of his friends and realizes that they are only looking out for him and are concerned for his well-being. He says that they are “breaking his heart.” He reacts the way that you or I would react to someone that loves us and doesn’t want anything to happen to us. You could compare it to a young soldier that has enlisted and is headed out the door. His family loves him and he loves his family but his sense of duty is so strong that he knows he has to go. Yet his family is weeping and begging him to stay. I can imagine the young soldier saying something similar to Paul, “why are you weeping and breaking my heart?” You know I have to do this. -- Paul says that he is ready to not only be bound but to die for the name of Jesus if that is what it must come to.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

Finally his friends understand and stop begging him. Instead they realize the best thing for him now is to put him in the care of the Lord and realize that the Lord’s will is the most important thing. We sometimes have to make that decision as well in life. We have those that we love and we do not want to lose them but there comes a time when we have to realize that trying to hold on to them is more selfish on our part than anything else, so we give them over to the Lord. I became that way with my dad in his final days. I would have given my very life to see him live but there came a point when I knew it was not the Lord’s will that he continue and I was willing to let him go.

As children of God, we should remember that the Lord’s will is the best will for our lives and always desire that His will be done above all. We will end here tonight and pick back up next Wednesday, Lord willing with Paul entering into Jerusalem.

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible