

Series: Acts

Title: Ready to Die!

Scripture: Acts 20: 36-38; 21: 1-15

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The love of Christ in the hearts of brethren causes submission to God, away from the vanity of our flesh. Through trial he grows us in love, in submission to him, making the believer: Ready to Die! Paul is the example before us.

**Acts 20: 22: And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: 23: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.**

On his way to Jerusalem, the Lord used Paul to teach other brethren how the love of Christ constrains us to submit to God. It is more for their benefit and ours than Paul's. Paul is ready. It begins at Ephesus. The Lord had done a great work at Ephesus through Paul. The brethren at Ephesus believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul loved them and they loved Paul. His departing was a great trial for those brethren at Ephesus, as well as for Paul.

## **I. LOVE MAKES BRETHERN DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY.**

**Acts 20: 37: And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, 38: Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.**

Have you ever known this love amongst brethren?

It is agreement, rejoicing in the gospel that is preached; agreement, thankfulness for your pastor and your brethren; commitment to Christ, to his gospel, to the brethren—where everything else is arranged around, and used for, the worship of Christ and the good of his saints. It is contentment to rest right where God has placed you because you know it is of God.

Hearts are bound together like this by Christ himself.

As each believer is strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. As Christ dwells in our hearts by faith we are filled with the fullness of God. It makes brethren to be rooted and grounded in love, as we comprehend with our fellow saints, the vastness of the love of Christ for us, which passes knowledge (Ephesians 3: 16-19.)

Where Christ has created this unity we will never leave, UNLESS, Christ moves us; then we will submit to him.

No matter how Christ has used Paul or uses any believer, it is only temporary. The ministry of every vessel which God uses will eventually come to an end, in death or by the direction of God the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist said, "I *am* the voice of One crying in the wilderness"

That One is Christ. It is not the vessel but Christ on whom we depend. These saints at Ephesus loved Paul, but they believed on Christ.

D. Unity of love is to trust Christ above all else.

The Lord allows us to see our utter weakness in his own apostles. The night our Lord was betrayed: “Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered” (Mark 14:27.) He allowed it for his glory. At the time the Lord told them this, he said:

John 13: 34: A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

How did the Lord love? He laid down HIS LIFE, for his friends. Believing on Christ, submitting to Christ rather than insisting on our fleshly wisdom, is our greatest love toward one another. When the apostles love began to be hindered by unbelief: questions arose, strife arose between them but the Lord immediately gave them the cure:

John 14: 1: Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In our text, the Lord shows us the opposite, it too is for his glory. The same grace that created these tears of love for Paul is the grace that made them tears of submission to the will of God. No confusion, no fuss, because they believed on Christ whom Paul preached. Look down the page, this is the heart of love for Christ which submits to God: **Acts 21: 14: And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.**

Psalm 133: 1: Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity! 2: *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; 3: As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore.

That anointing ointment consecrated Aaron to Christ. And it separated Aaron to Christ above all others. This grace comes down in abundance from God just as the dew of Hermon.

Get this, let this settle down into our hearts: This is beyond comprehension to the natural man. The love that binds believers together in sweet harmony is the love of Christ for us which makes Christ preeminent over our love for each other, even our own lives. When he gives this grace, he creates submission for his glory over our own glory. His preeminence, his glory, is always best for one another. This is what bound Paul to go to Jerusalem. And made his brethren submit to the will of God in the matter.

## **II. THIS CONSECRATION IS INCREASED AS THE HOLY SPRIT BEARS WITNESS IN OUR HEARTS OF THE FAITHFULNESS AND POWER OF THE FATHER AND OF HIS SON ACCORDING TO HIS WORD.**

**Acts 21: 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: 2: And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth. 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. 4: And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.**

This is a case of what Paul said in **Acts 20, 23**. The Holy Spirit made these disciples know that bonds and afflictions awaited Paul. But they did not know what the Holy Spirit had put in Paul’s heart—that he was bound in spirit to go to Jerusalem. These disciples merely tell Paul what they conclude, as any brother would, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. Trials such as this are not to turn us away from trusting Christ, but to increase our faith in Christ.

These saints at Tyre bear great witness to God's faithfulness to fulfill his word toward his saints.

**Illustration:** *Ye shall be witnesses unto me...* What makes a human being? The answer is: "being." What makes a believer a witness unto Christ? The answer is "being."

Isaiah 43: 8 (RSV): Bring forth the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears!  
9: Let all the nations gather together, and let the peoples assemble. Who among them can declare this, and show us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to justify them, or let them hear and say, It is true.

Remember, Isaiah 23, the LORD showed a grand illustration. The LORD declared long before through Tyre, that after he strips his remnant of all vain confidence, and makes his remnant to behold their judgment poured out on Christ, he would turn again to them in mercy, sanctifying them unto the Lord. These few disciples are a witness to the faithfulness of the LORD of hosts by their merely "being" believers.

**Illustration:** The cartoon, Charlie Brown, the teacher.

That is sort of what happened to me as I listened to these disciples. I can picture Paul listening to their warning but all the while marveling at God's faithfulness and power to execute all his promises as he beholds their faith in Christ.

By these disciples merely being believers, this is what we hear:

Isaiah 43: 10 (RSV): "These are my witnesses," says the LORD, "my servants whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. 11: I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.

Here is the LORD's promise and why he is faithful to his word.

**Isaiah 43: 1: But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. 2: When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. 3: For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. 4: Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. 5: Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; 6: I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; 7: *Even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.**

Perhaps that is what Paul saw in them as well.

**Acts 21: 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.**

Here is what we have seen: LOVE CAUSES BRETHREN TO DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY, SUBMITTING TO THAT WHICH GLORIFIES CHRIST; THIS CONSECRATION IS CREATED AS

THE HOLY SPRIT BEARS WITNESS OF THE FAITHFULNESS and POWER OF THE FATHER AND OF HIS SON ACCORDING TO HIS WORD.

### III. THIS CONSECRATION IS BECAUSE EVERY BELIEVER IS TAUGHT OF GOD TO TRUST AND OBEY HIM ALONE.

**Acts 21: 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. **9:** And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. **10:** And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. **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.

Something different happens this time. The trial becomes stronger.

**Acts 21: 12:** And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

Not only those of Caesarea, but also, Paul's dearest traveling companions begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

They stood with him when he was warned before, they stood with him during the trial at Ephesus, they stood with him through the trial at Tyre, but seeing this great display of afflictions before their eyes, even his own companion's loose heart and beg him not to go.

Paul stands without any support, only the Lord.

No one ever came between our Savior and his Father but the Lord Jesus Christ was touched with the same feelings, as Paul experienced here, yet without sin. The Lord's own friend betrayed him into the hands of his enemies and his apostles deserted him that night. But our Savior, as the righteous, faithful Son of man was always dependent upon none but the Father. On the cross, we see it most clearly--there was no one between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ his Son.

Isaiah 63:3: I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people *there was* none with me:

God the Father in perfect righteousness and faithfulness did what he promised to do when Christ was made sin, for his people—the Father glorified himself and his Son by separating himself from the Substitute in holy judgment. And through it all, the Son glorified the Father by laying down his life, offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears in perfect faith to his Father. Even in the furnace of affliction—heated to perfection--he trusted none but his Father alone who was able to save him from death. We have heard it said, "God forsaking God." But even more it was God glorifying God: satisfaction made by God, the Just One and the Justifier, the Faithful One manifesting his righteous faithfulness.

Here is faithfulness, **Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit...and he gave up the ghost.** Here is faithfulness: **And was heard in that he feared.** He raised him from the dead:

In our text, like the Lord, now there is none of his brethren standing with Paul. But here is faithfulness:

**Acts 21: 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.

Paul loved these brethren. But he loved Christ more and submitted to him in all things. Because he did he

taught his brethren. What Paul says here is what our Lord said to his apostles: don't try to deliver me from this trial. Put up your swords, I must suffer these things. Instead, watch over your own souls; pray that God glorify his name in his Son. He shall!

The Father teaches us in the heart, strengthens us in the inner man, where Christ abides by faith and we are filled with the fullness of God. What is that? It has to do with being fully convinced:

Romans 8: 34:...It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. 35: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36: As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37: Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38: For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39: Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Philippians 1: 19: For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20: According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death. 21: For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

Are \_\_\_\_\_ you \_\_\_\_\_ ready \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ die.  
Is Christ your life? Is Christ your Righteousness? Is Christ your All? Is dying gain to you?

We were once like the 10 virgins who had the lamp but no oil. We had a form of religion but not the Power and Wisdom of God dwelling in us. We looked into the doctrine of love like we looked into the acts of the apostles and into the law and the prophets. We saw only the acts of men and tried to imitate them. We pointed others to the acts of men. And we went on as slaves committed to this world full of strife and confusion.

The Spirit of Jesus makes the believer look beyond the acts of men, the letter of the word, to the power and wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ who works this in his people. The Spirit teaches us the same way in daily lives.

The difference is that the love of God is a Person abiding in our hearts by the Spirit—keeping us, instructing us, moving us, making us look beyond our flesh, the circumstances to Christ our King. We know that in nothing shall we be ashamed.

Psalm 27:10: When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

The love of Christ constrains us to submit to him: to arrange everything in this world around our Savior, his word and his people, because we are no longer slaves but his willing bondservants. He makes his people willing to leave tonight, leave jobs, families and everything behind to be with him in glory OR to walk into the lions den for the sake of the gospel, for sinners in need of the truth. He makes us willing to support one another in that which glorifies Christ.

By love in the heart, by faithfulness to his word, by his power, through the Spirit, by God the Father teaching us through every trial, by Christ abiding in our hearts by faith, he does make his children willing. Here is an example: **Acts 21: 14: And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. 15: And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.**

May God give us grace to cease and submit to him. Brethren, one day very soon, by his grace, those who are ready, shall take up our carriages and go up to him in heavens Jerusalem. Amen!