

## Acts 21:1-40

“The Will Of The Lord Be Done”

We catch up to Paul and his bandwagon on their journey to Jerusalem having just spent some time on the shores of Miletus with the elders of the church in Ephesus. Whereby Pastor Paul was pouring out his heart both for them, and the body of Christ to whom they ministered, pleading with them to tend *to* the flock, preparing them for the problems that were certain to come *in* to the flock, reminding them of the principles of ministry, what we do and why we do it. That it's not about what I *get*, but about what I can *give*, not about being served, but serving, and laying down our lives for the sake of others, equipping the saints for the work of the ministry via the simple teaching of the word of God vs by vs, line upon line, precept upon precept. Watching out for them, warning them of the dangers that lurk about both *around* them and *with in* them; and really it's an incredible portion of scripture so we took some 3 weeks in just those 20 vs. and As ch 20 comes to a close it's with that emotional upheaval of a moment whereby they all take to their knees right there in the open air on the beach and Paul begins to pray with them. and They fell on his neck and kissed him, and wept *over* him sorrowing over the words which he shared with them that they'd never see him again this side of eternity, and they accompanied him to the ship.

### Vs1-3

There in vs 1 where Luke mentions that they “departed” from them, it really further emphasizes that emotional moment in that it's a word that really means to be “drug away” or even “torn apart.” “and When we were torn apart, we set sail,” there was a real bond there, and it wasn't easy to separate, but they realized what really mattered ultimately was *kingdom* matters. The ministry has a tendency to create some of the most deeply rooted friendships, and pure loving relationships more so than any other means you could ever been apart of. There's just something that happens when you've set out with someone to be used by the Lord, and share in the heart of the Lord that has a way of weaving your hearts together on a level that your 9 to 5, or a particular mutual hobby just doesn't have the capacity to do. and Endearing friendships are created that will last a lifetime, but what we're seeing here is that as painful as it may sometimes be, there's an understanding that as much as I love you, and perhaps you love me, we love the Lord more, He's the One who brought us together in the 1<sup>st</sup> place. and I'd love to spend all the time in the world with you, but God has a plan and a purpose for my life that may at times take me *away* from you in the now, but we'll be together forever in eternity. God will at times move us on in different directions. Because there's a whole world out there leaving the planet everyday with out Jesus Christ and if we all balled up in our own little group because of the love and friendship that we so enjoy with one another, than who's going to share the message of Jesus Christ with a hurt and dying world. So be it to give the good news of salvation, or to encourage the brethren unto further sanctification or any # of reasons, God owns the editing rights to our lives and can take us where He wants whenever He wants to do it. It's a bummer for us at times emotionally, but it will be all the more advantageous *eternally*, and that's where the heart and mind of God is at, focused on our eternal well being.

Now these various places mentioned here, “Cos, Rhodes, Patara” if you’ll notice on the map, they were all about a days journey, from Miletus to Cos, Cos to Rhodes, Rhodes to Patara. But when Paul got to Patara he found a ship that wasn’t going to bump on down the coastline a day at a time but rather a ship that was going to head on out to sea saving him no telling how many days journey by just heading directly to Tyre and from there on down to Ptolemais on to Caesarea and ultimately Jerusalem. Now when they landed at Tyre we read in vs 4.

#### Vs 4-6

Few things here, 1<sup>st</sup> of all we note that when they got to the city they “found” disciples. The word there really indicates a diligent searching; they sought *out* and looked *for* other believers to fellowship with. How often we might go on vacation, or somewhere we’re only going to be for a week, so we don’t bother looking up a church, or going to church while we’re in transit somewhere. Paul and his mission’s team recognized the importance of not forsaking the assembling together of the saints. They didn’t want to just hang out on the beach for a week, they wanted some good godly interaction with the some brothers and sisters, to encourage them and be encouraged *by* them. and I’ve found that it doesn’t matter where you go on the planet when you finally find some people in love with Jesus Christ there’s instant oneness, koinonia. Because you share the same Spirit, you have the same Dad, you’re family, and you don’t feel like you’re lodging amongst strangers, but rather you’re hanging out with family. So when they got to Tyre they sought out some disciples and stayed with them.

We read here that they told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. and This is the primary vs that people who believe Paul erred by going to Jerusalem cling to, and I suppose if this were the only vs we had concerning it we’d be forced to draw that conclusion. But it seems more accurate to me in the big picture of what we have happening in the book of Acts is that this was another warning for Paul as to what was going to happen to him when he went to Jerusalem and the disciples *interpreted* that as a word that he wasn’t to go. Couple weeks ago I spent a little time developing with you Paul’s purposed determination. The fact that God is well able to direct our lives, no, we’re not impervious to mistakes but Paul’s proven track record is obedience the leading of the Holy Spirit. I just can’t buy the fact that he would willingly rebel against the Spirit’s articulated, non-questionable direction for his life. But what we *do* see over and over again is God’s faithfulness to Paul in preparing him for troubled times ahead of him. Even when he was converted God told Ananias that He would *show* Paul how many things he *must suffer* for His name’s sake. and God consistently made Paul aware of problems that were to take place, in Corinth He even made Paul aware that there *wouldn’t* be any problems for him there. By the time we get to ch 20 Paul had been made aware over and over again that chains and tribulations await him in Jerusalem, he said that the Spirit testified of that in every city he went to. Here in a minute we’ll see him warned again, in a few ch we’ll see the angel of the Lord stand by him and inform him of a shipwreck that’s about to take place, but that none of them will be lost. So warnings of what awaited him seemed to be common-place for him, but they weren’t meant to *prevent* him *from* going, but rather to *prepare* him *for* going.

There are other things that lead me to this conclusion, #1 When we get to ch 23, in the very 1<sup>st</sup> vs Paul says as he’s standing before the council being as it were on trial, “*Men and*

*brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.*” Acts 23:1 Which is to say that, “From the moment Jesus Christ arrested my life up even until this very moment I’ve lived in all good conscience before God.” That word “good” could even be translated “agreeable” his conscience had been in agreement with God from the beginning of his relationship with God even to that day. Which means what? He never knowingly violated God’s purpose, plan, or will for his life. Not only that but #2 Part of God’s plan for his life was to stand before rulers and kings, Jesus said of him in Acts 9:15 “...*he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.*” How many kings has he stood before yet? None, but out of this incident that’s exactly what he’ll do, he’ll go before king Agrippa and history points to the fact that he even got a stand before Caesar Nero.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> reason (outside of the sensitivity with which he walked in the Spirit and told the Eph elders that he was bound in the spirit) that I believe he wasn’t wrong here is that when he wrote to the Philippians of his imprisonment he said, “*But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*” Phil 1:12-14 Or to understand that another way, “What’s happened to me has in no way, shape, or form hindered the propulsion of the gospel, but to the contrary it’s given me a platform to share the gospel with governors, kings, military men, palace guards and all sorts of people that otherwise I’d have never seen, and others have been emboldened to preach all the more. When he wrote to Timothy at the end of his life he told him that he’d “finished his course.” If he’d been diverted from his course how could he say that? So, if you want to believe that Paul deviated from God’s will based upon this vs you’re free to do so, if you want to look at the entirety of the word and be right, than you’ll agree with me. Did the Spirit warn Paul here? You bet, but the disciples took what the Spirit said, and interpreted that as, “You better not go.” But the warnings were preparatory, not preventative.

2 Things quickly about vs 5, I love to see the whole family here spending time in godly endeavors. Wives and children were accompanying them to the edge of the city, “Wednesday evening is our family night, that’s why we don’t come to church.” As if sitting under the waterfall of the word of God and discussing what it was that God ministered to you on your way home isn’t the best time you can spend together on a Wednesday evening. Or finding things to do together as a family in serving, we had a family here that would clean the church together for along time, one of the kids took out the trash, the other mopped the floors, mom and dad were on vacuum duty, window detail, straightening out the various rooms, and it was a good thing. So see that family matters, along with ministry and body life can go hand in hand.

Then we have this scene here reminiscent of what happened on the shores of Miletus except again it’s wives and children on their knees right along with Dad there with Paul and the team. What a neat public witness, it’s like when we have baptisms at the creek and there are

people there fishing, swilling beer or whatever and we're out there praying, worshipping and giving that public declaration of the inward transformation of our lives, it's just a good public witness. (On to vs 7)

#### Vs7-8

To me this is just an amazing picture of the grace of God, why is that? Because the last time Philip came near to Paul (as far as we know) it was too close for comfort in that Paul was wreaking havoc in the church having every believer he could find hauled off and put to death. This is the same Philip that was appointed in Acts 6 as one of the deacons in the early church who was called upon to serve tables, perhaps you remember who else was called upon? A man named Stephen, now about that time Paul (known at that time as Saul) was just tearing the church up (physically) and he was the one holding the people's coats while Philip's friend Stephen was being stoned to death. Then Philip being one who was scattered from Jerusalem went to Samaria, a massive revival broke out, God directed him to the Ethiopian eunuch whom he led to Christ, then he was literally beamed to Azotus by the Spirit, and passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea. and Apparently he settled in there and has since had a family and the whole bit. But my point is that it's thanks to Paul that he fled Jerusalem, it's thanks to Paul that his friend Stephen was put to death, now 25-30 yrs later he hears a knock at the door and guess who's standing outside? Now he no doubt knew that Paul had been serving the Lord for the last 20-30 yrs but can you imagine the flashbacks, perhaps the conversations they had? To be a fly on that wall, rehearsing their history, Paul asking his forgiveness.

But this is just another testimony of the transforming power of the grace of God in and towards our lives. He was pressed out *by* Paul, now some 20+ yrs later his home is open *to* Paul. Once at opposite ends of the spectrum, now one in Christ, with God nothing will be impossible.

#### Vs9-14

Back in vs 9 we're given a little side note about Philip, he was a good godly dad. He had 4 daughters, not married, all of whom had been raised in Christ, and they all had the gift of prophecy. There where it says they prophesied, it means with regularity, it wasn't uncommon for these girls to operate in the spiritual gift of prophecy. and Of course in this we're reminded again of the prominent position that women can hold in the body of Christ. Are they to usurp authority over a man? No, is there any other limitation? No, be it overseeing women, children, exhorting the body, praying in the assembly, prophesying, serving in various capacities, it's all good.

Then we have this dramatic scene that reminds us of the prophets in the OT whereby Agabus (whom we've seen before) enters the equation, steps into the scene, takes Paul's belt, binds himself with it and says, "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.” Another warning, do we read here of the Holy Spirit saying, “Don’t go”? No, but He makes clear that when Paul gets to Jerusalem troubled times await him, the same confirming message he’s gotten everywhere else. and Once again when the disciples heard the message they said, “Don’t go Paul.” and They pleaded with him, look again at Paul’s response, (vs13).

He says, “Look, you guys keep this up and I might cave in, please quit trying to persuade me!” and He speaks to them again of his purposed determination to follow through and stay committed to God’s call upon his life. “If this is what God has prepared for me, than I’m prepared for it, not only to be bound, but to die if need be for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” Paul’s one aim was that Christ would be magnified and glorified *in* him, whatever that may mean to him. He told the Philippians, “...*according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.*” Phil 1:20 Paul says, “If it’s what God has for me and by this He’ll be glorified *in* me, than I’m ready.” and that’s really what I want to draw your attention to in this vs, those 3 words, “I -am- ready.”

How important it is to be ready, for whatever it is that God may have for you at any given moment, perhaps to share the Word of God with a friend or family member at a given opportunity, are you ready for that? Should God open the door for you to share the gospel with a hurting individual, are you ready to give the gospel in an instant? To the Romans Paul said, “So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.” Rom 1:15 He told Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” 2 Tim 4:2 Peter said, “...*sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;*” 1 Peter 3:15 Perhaps God would call upon you to go somewhere to accomplish a particular purpose, be it short term missions, or maybe as far as you know, a permanent move somewhere, are you ready for that? He told the Corinthians, “Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls;” 2 Cor 12:14-15 He was ready to go, and give of himself that a certain situation might be worked out looking for nothing in return. Are you ready to be sent of the Lord? Perhaps imprisonment, persecution, even death, here Paul says “I’m ready for that too.” Jesus said that we’re to be ready for His return, are you ready for that? Are you prepared in your heart of hearts to meet Jesus face to face *today*? Paul was ready for any and all the above, he told them he was purposed to allow God His way in his life and asked them to honor that, so they said.

Vs 14, the will of the Lord be done. and That’s what lies in the center of all this, that the will of the Lord be done, how we need to rest in that place, that come what may, “Lord, your will be done.” and Here’s what we need to see, God’s will isn’t always easy on us physically, but it’s always the most beneficial for us, what? Eternally, Paul knew that, so he just wanted

them to realize that whatever God's will was for him, he was prepared to accept it. It may involve preaching, imprisonment, persecution, other destinations travel-wise or even death, but he'd committed his life into the Lord's hands and was comfortable with the results of that. God help us to come to that point. That, "God's will be done," not just be religious rhetoric that comes out of our mouths, but that we come to a place whereby we're comfortable with the fact that come what may we know God's in control and we're ok with the outcome of that in our lives.

Vs15-25

What's going on here? Paul comes in, tells them everything in detail with respect to what God has been doing in his life and ministry among the Gentiles, they all praise the Lord, say, "Man that's awesome, but listen here's the deal. There are thousands of Jews here in Jerusalem who've come to believe on Jesus Christ and they have a love for the law of Moses." (Which is to say they really didn't have a grip on God's grace yet) "They're being told that you're teaching the Jews to forsake Moses, not to circumcise their kids and all, now they're going to hear that you're in town, so listen. Take these 4 guys, pay their way so that they can finish their vow, join them in the final stages of it, then everyone will see that you're a good Jewish boy and there's nothing to worry about." You see they realized that the Gentiles weren't to be brought under the Mosaic law, but they had a problem with the Jewish community forsaking their roots (so to speak).

Now Paul had already written Romans and Galatians by now, and as you read those epistles you realize that he was the quintessential champion of the grace of God, he knew that Christ was the end of the law for all who believe. But here's the deal, he never told the Jews to not hold to certain rituals of the law, as a matter of fact he said, "*...as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.*" 1 Cor 7:17-20 Which is to say, if you're a Jew, live as a Jew, if you're a Gentile, don't feel bound to the rituals of the law, because it's not about what we do or what we don't do, it's about what Jesus *has already done*. and I'm going to keep this brief but one thing we need to understand is that the same grace that frees us from *having to keep* certain ordinances is the same grace that *allows others to keep them* should they choose. The main thing is that people realize that it has nothing to do with either their personal salvation, or their righteous standing before God. You want to make a vow before God, you're free to do that, if you don't want you, you're free not to, that's the marvelous thing about the grace of God. You want to where a suit to church, that's awesome, if you're comfortable in shorts and a T-shirt, that's fine too. You're not more righteous with a suit, less righteous without a suit, your righteousness is of Christ and Christ alone.

Now had Paul thought this pointed to a right standing with God, he'd have never done it (remember he lived in good conscience before God) he'd taken a vow himself back in ch 18 while he was at Corinth.

Now there became a big problem with the Jews and the sacrificial system and them not being able to let that go, and that's why the book of Hebrews was written, so that they'd see that if they looked to another sacrifice other than Christ for righteousness, that the sacrifice of Christ was of no effect for them.

But really I commend Paul here again because he's following his own word when he wrote to the Romans saying, "*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*" Rom 12:18 "Hey, if my doing this will keep the peace, and I'm not compromising my position in Christ, than fine. To the Corinthians he wrote, "*For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; 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;*" 1 Cor 9:19-20 That's really what's happening here, seeking to win the more to Christ. and He's submitting to the leadership of the church in Jerusalem, if there was error here (and I'm not sure there wasn't) but I believe it'd have been not on Paul's part in submitting to those he considered as over him in the Lord (he considered himself the least of the apostles) but rather on the part of the leadership for asking him to go against the grain of perhaps his own biblically grounded convictions regarding the grace of God.

But Paul says, "Fine, I'll pay their way (he'd just brought a sizeable offering to the church) and go through this ritual." It was a Nazirite vow of consecration and at the end of the vow they'd take a week and spend their time in the temple and the poor would need someone to sponsor them since they'd be off work, need to by the sacrifice (be it a peace offering or whatever) and all the rest.

Vs26-29

What's the error to avoid here? Presuming on people, they just presumed Paul had brought those guys past the court of the Gentiles into the temple, the fact is he didn't, but now their presumption is going to throw things into a panic stricken swirl of a mess. Which is the typical result of presuming, we just make things worse.

Vs30-36

Sort of reminiscent of the Ephesus riot isn't it? Confusion and Chaos, who's the author of confusion? Satan, not doubt what Agabus had said and demonstrated flashed into Paul's mind as those shackles were fastened onto him, the chains that awaited him are now upon him. The very thing James was trying to avoid, he became instrumental in bringing to pass, it's because of his idea that Paul was there in the 1<sup>st</sup> place. But things are happening just like God said they would, and they always will. Everywhere Paul went there was 1 of 2 results, a revival or a riot, and as they grabbed hold of him and began to beat him, he probably thought, "Here we go again."

Vs37-40

What do you think, an inspired chapter break? What did he say? You'll have to tune in next time, same chap time, same chap place for the exciting conclusion of this event in Paul's life. You kind of wonder where all the Christians were don't you? James said they were all over the place, but they sure weren't there when Paul needed them, he had to be rescued by the Roman military. Now he's poised on the staircase prepared to share the gospel before thousands, no doubt the tension in the air was intense as a hush fell over that crowd.

Prayer Points: Lord would You help us to be prepared in season and out of season for whatever it is that You might have purposed for our lives. That Your will Lord, might be fully accomplished in our lives, that we would live before You in all good conscience, that our conscience would be in agreement with Your desire for our lives. Help us to live peaceably with all men as much as depends upon us, and Lord we thank You for the transforming power of Your grace, that you take lives heading the opposite direction of You, and You turn us around, and in Your grace, You give us life, now help us to lead the life *You've* give us, for You and Your glory.

If you're here and you don't know the Lord, you've never given your heart to the Lord, than you're not ready to meet the Lord face to face. I'd encourage you to come to the place where you're at peace with allowing the will of the Lord to be done in *your life*. and This is it, God is not *willing* that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Translation, God's will for you is salvation, but only if *you're* willing to let Him save you. How does that happen (John 3:16) believe upon Jesus Christ, His redeeming work upon the cross for the forgiveness of your sin, give Him your heart, let Him into your life, and you'll be saved.