

SBCOD Bible Study Notes

**5-6-26
Acts 21**

Paul Is Warned Again In The City Of Tyre – Verses 1-4

¹ After we had torn ourselves away from them, we put out to sea and sailed straight to Kos. The next day we went to Rhodes and from there to Patara. ² We found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, went on board and set sail. ³ After sighting Cyprus and passing to the south of it, we sailed on to Syria. We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴ We sought out the disciples there and stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

21:1-4 Did Paul disobey the Holy Spirit by going to Jerusalem? No. More likely, the Holy Spirit warned these believers about the suffering that Paul would face in Jerusalem. They drew the conclusion that he should not go there because of that danger. This is supported by 21:10-12, where the local believers, after hearing that Paul would be turned over to the Romans, begged him to turn back.

Departing From Tyre, On The Way To Jerusalem – Verses 5-9

⁵ When it was time to leave, we left and continued on our way. All of them, including wives and children, accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray. ⁶ After saying goodbye to each other, we went aboard the ship, and they returned home. ⁷ We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and sisters and stayed with them for a day. ⁸ Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. ⁹ He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

20:5-6 We departed and went on our way: Despite the heartfelt pleas of the Christians of Tyre, Paul and his group did not turn away from going to Jerusalem. He was persuaded it was God's will, so they continued. They all accompanied us... till we were out of the city: The practice of walking with a traveler to the outskirts of the city was traditional; yet the practice of kneeling on the shore together for prayer was uniquely Christian.

20:7 We came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day: It must have been wonderful for Paul and his companions to find Christians in virtually every city they stopped. This showed the expansion and the deepening of the Christian movement across the Roman Empire. Christians were everywhere, it seemed.

21:9 Obviously the gift of prophecy was given to both men and women. Women actively participated in God's work (2:17; Philippians 4: 3). Other women who prophesied include Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14), Isaiah's wife (Isaiah 8:3), and Anna (Luke 2:36-38).

Agabus Warns Paul At Caesarea – Verses 10-14

¹⁰ After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this

belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.”¹² When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem.¹³ Then Paul answered, “Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”¹⁴ When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, “The Lord’s will be done.”

21:13-14 Fifteen years earlier, Agabus had predicted the famine in Jerusalem (11:27-29). Paul knew he would be imprisoned in Jerusalem. Although his friends pleaded with him to not go there, he knew that he had to because God wanted him to. No one enjoys pain, but a faithful disciple wants above all else to please God. Our desire to please God should overshadow our desire to avoid hardship and suffering. When we really want to do God’s will, we must accept all that comes with it— even the pain. Then we can say with Paul’s companions, “The Lord’s will be done.”

Departing Caesarea and goes to Jerusalem – Verses 15-19

¹⁵ After this, we started on our way up to Jerusalem.¹⁶ Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and brought us to the home of Mnason, where we were to stay. He was a man from Cyprus and one of the early disciples.¹⁷ When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us warmly.¹⁸ The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present.¹⁹ Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

20:15 We packed and went up to Jerusalem: Paul and his companions finally were on the way to Jerusalem. Paul’s deep love for his Jewish brothers and sisters made every trip to Jerusalem important.

20:17-19 Paul reports the good work of God among the Gentiles. He told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry: Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Paul met with the leaders of the church there (James and all the elders), and gave them a full report of his work in preaching and planting churches. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord: The elders in Jerusalem were thankful for what God was doing among the Gentiles. They saw some of the Gentile converts with Paul and could tell of their genuine love for and commitment to Jesus.

Paul Learns Of His Bad Reputation Among Some Christians Of Jerusalem – Verses 20-25

²⁰ When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law.²¹ They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.²² What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come,²³ so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow.²⁴ Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law.²⁵ As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.”

21:21 The Jerusalem council (Acts 15) had settled the issue of circumcision of Gentile believers. Evidently a rumor said that Paul had gone far beyond their decision, even forbidding Jews to circumcise their children. This, of course, was not true, so Paul willingly submitted to Jewish custom

to show that he was not working against the council's decision and that he was still Jewish in his lifestyle. Sometimes we must go the second mile to avoid offending others or hindering God's work.

21:23-24 Because Paul was going to participate with the four men in the vow (apparently he had been asked to pay for some of the required expenses), he would need to take part in the purification ceremony for entering the temple (Numbers 6:9-20). Paul submitted himself to this Jewish custom to keep peace in the Jerusalem church. Although Paul was a man of strong convictions, he was willing to compromise on non-essential points, becoming all things to all people so that he might save some (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). Often churches split over disagreements about minor issues or traditions. Like Paul, we should remain firm on Christian essentials but flexible on non-essentials. Of course, no one should violate his or her true convictions, but sometimes we need to honor Christ by mutual submission for the sake of the gospel.

21:23-24 The Jewish laws can be thought of in two ways. Paul rejected one way and accepted the other. (1) Paul rejected the idea that the Old Testament laws bring salvation to those who keep them. Salvation is freely given by God's gracious act. We receive salvation through faith. The laws are of no value for salvation except to show us our sin. (2) Paul accepted the view that the Old Testament laws prepare for and teach about the coming of Jesus Christ. Christ fulfilled the law and released us from its burden of guilt. But the law still teaches many valuable principles and provides guidelines for grateful living. Paul was not observing the laws in order to be saved. He was simply keeping the laws as custom to avoid offending those he wished to reach with the gospel (see Romans 3:21-31; 7:4-6; 13:9-10).

Agreeing With The Recommendation, Paul Sponsors And Joins Some Christians In A Jewish Purification Rite – Verse 26

26 The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.

20:26 Then Paul took the men: Paul could agree to this and sponsor the four men taking the vow of consecration because there was never a hint that such things would be required of Gentiles as a test of righteousness. "He had shown them that their ceremonies were useless but not destructive; that they were only dangerous when they depended on them for salvation."

20:26 At which time an offering should be made: It's important to understand that this offering — an animal sacrifice — was not in any way for the purpose of atonement or forgiveness. Paul absolutely understood that only the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross atones for sin. Yet not every sacrifice in the Jewish system was for atonement; many were for thanksgiving or dedication, as this one was.

Jews from Asia stir a mob against Paul – Verses 27-30

27 When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, ²⁸ shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help us! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place." ²⁹ (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.) ³⁰ The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut.

20:27-30 Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd: They claimed that Paul was against the people [Israel], the law, and this place [the temple], but these accusations were unfounded. Paul simply rejected trust in any of these as a basis for righteousness before God, which comes only through Jesus Christ. All the city was disturbed; and the people ran together: The crowd was enlarged because it was feast-time (Acts 20:16). It was enraged because they believed Paul not only preached against the people, the law, and the temple, but also profaned the temple by bringing Gentiles into its inner courts (they said, “he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place”).

Roman Soldiers Rescue Paul – Verses 31-36

³¹ While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³² He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³ The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. ³⁵ When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers. ³⁶ The crowd that followed kept shouting, “Get rid of him!”

21:31 Now as they were seeking to kill him: Paul had been seized by an enraged mob, and the mob didn't just want to take him out of the temple courts. They wanted to kill him, right there in the outer courtyard area of the temple mount. Paul had been near death because of the attacks of murderous mobs before (Acts 14:5,19), and he must have thought, “Here we go again!”

21:33-36 News came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar: When they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul: The Romans didn't sympathize with Paul, but they were interested in keeping public order, so they arrested Paul both for his own protection and to remove the cause of the uproar.

Paul Speaks To The Crowd – Verses 37-40

³⁷ As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, “May I say something to you?” “Do you speak Greek?” he replied. ³⁸ “Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the wilderness some time ago?” ³⁹ Paul answered, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people.” ⁴⁰ After receiving the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic.

21:37-38 By speaking in Greek, Paul showed that he was a cultured, educated man and not just a common rebel starting riots in the streets. The language grabbed the commander's attention and gave Paul protection and the opportunity to give his defense.

21:40 Paul was speaking in Aramaic, the common language among Palestinian Jews. He used Aramaic not only to communicate in the language of his listeners, but also to show that he was a devout Jew and had respect for the Jewish laws and customs. Paul spoke Greek to the Roman officials and Aramaic to the Jews.