

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

## ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### ACROSS THE SEA (ACTS 21:1-9) "AFTER WE TORE OURSELVES AWAY..."

After the sad departure from the Ephesian leaders, Paul and his team travel to the southern coast of Asia Minor to get on a ship to Phoenicia north of Israel.

- In Phoenicia they stopped in Tyre for 7 days because of maritime scheduling, so Paul decided to find some of the Christians there and hang out.

### NOTICE THE FAMILY ASPECT OF OUR FAITH

When leaving Tyre, the Christians pray on the beach with Paul. When arriving in Ptolemais, they were greeted by "brothers and sisters" and they stayed in their home.

- **One of the most beautiful things about Christianity is the family dynamic. Though we may not have blood relatives, we all have family in Christ.**

### CATCHING UP WITH PHILIP THE EVANGELIST

As Paul hangs out in Asia Minor a little longer, he sends two of his protégés, Timothy and Erastus, to North Greece.

- Paul arrived in Caesarea and went to Philip's house. Last time we talked about Philip was in Acts 8, 20 years ago in the timeline of Acts. Philip had a great reputation as a leader in Israel.
- Philip's ministry began as one of 7 chosen to feed the poor in Acts 6. He is most famous for his Ethiopian eunuch encounter in Acts 8.

### FOUR DAUGHTERS THAT PROPHESIED

Philip had four unmarried (virgin) daughters that had the gift of prophesy. Prophesy is the ability to explain scripture and the will of God to others. It can also mean to foretell future events.

- **It is important to note that women were prophesying.** Luke mentions Anna in his gospel and Peter mentions women prophesying in Acts 2.

### DARK PROPHECY (ACTS 21:10-16)

#### ANOTHER BLAST FROM THE PAST

In chapter 11 we met the prophet Agabus who predicted a famine. We meet him again after he traveled up to Philip's house and gave a dark prophecy to Paul.

- Agabus takes Paul's belt and ties his feet and hands to represent coming persecution. Luke is drawing a parallel to Jesus in this passage.

### FEAR OFTEN OVERCOMES US

Though the people around Paul knew that Agabus was a prophet of God, they pleaded with Paul to not go into Jerusalem in fear of him being hurt or killed.

- This frustrated Paul because they were "breaking his heart" by not supporting the prophecy and allowing fear to get in the way of moving forward.

### "THE LORD'S WILL BE DONE"

Paul could not be persuaded to turn back and he says, "I am ready not only to be bound but also to die... for the name of the Lord Jesus."

- **This is where all of us must land spiritually, willing to give it all for His name.** Interestingly, he would arrive during Pentecost that celebrated the Holy Spirit filling and empowering believers.

### THE TRIP TAKES A TURN

The missionaries never made it back to Antioch, Paul's hometown. When Paul said that he "must visit Rome," he didn't know how that would take place, but Luke is about to tell us.

### JERUSALEM (ACTS 21:17-25)

#### A WARM WELCOME

As Paul and his team arrive in Jerusalem they receive a warm welcome and are greeted by James, the leader of the church. After the greetings, Paul told about the mission trips and the advancement of the faith to the Gentiles.

- Paul also gave them the money raised by the new churches (Paul's main reason for coming).

#### A LITTLE ONE-UPMANSHIP

After being blessed with money and hearing all of the awesome things Paul had witnessed, the Jewish Christian leaders tried to one-up him by declaring "many thousands of Jews believed and are zealous for the law."

- **Not only were they competitive, they were celebrating rules that weren't God's, but manmade religious laws.**

### GOSSIP CONTRIBUTED TO THE RIFT

Many of the Christians in Israel had heard that Paul was turning everyone away from the teachings of Moses and the Torah. This was not true. Paul taught *grace through faith, the central theme of Jesus' teachings.*

- **Though it is ok if people want to observe OT laws, we are not saved by our sacrifices, but by Jesus'.**

### THE ELDERS WANTED TO CLEAN UP THE MESS

The rift between Paul and the Jewish Christians was an embarrassing public relations problem for the elders in Jerusalem. In order to fix the problem before it got out to the public, they put a plan in place to show Paul was ok.

- **As Christians we need to be more concerned with God's will and truth than with our public appearance.**

### SO, PAUL JUMPED THROUGH HOOPS

For the greater good of the community, Paul agreed to go through a purification ceremony that would prove that he honored the Torah.

- This wouldn't have violated his personal convictions and he knew it wasn't a requirement to be "clean." **Paul wanted to honor their convictions and bring peace to the situation.**

### A RIOT #6 (ACTS 21:26-32)

#### THE PR STUNT DIDN'T WORK

When the purification days were ending, some Jews from Asia Minor (they hated him) saw Paul in the temple. They "stirred up the crowd and seized him" claiming that he taught "against our people, our law, and this place [temple]."

- **Allegiance to religion over relationship will always lead to division.**

#### HANGING OUT WITH THE WRONG KIND OF PERSON

The mob also accused Paul of taking a Gentile into the temple because they had seen him with Trophimus. The religious fanatics displayed prejudice

- This incited the 6th riot that Paul was the center of. They dragged Paul out of the temple and closed the gates as to not desecrate the temple grounds.

#### AS LONG AS IT'S NOT IN THE BUILDING

Like today, many Christians believe we can live two lives, the religious day life and the secular life. *We condone violence, racism, sexism, and all kinds of evil as long as our religious obligations are in order.*

- **We cannot compartmentalize our faith. We are either followers or we are not.**

#### "AS THEY WERE TRYING TO KILL HIM..."

As the mob was beating Paul to near death, a Roman Chiliarch (leader of 1000 soldiers) heard about the developing riot and rushed to keep the Pax Romana.

- Claudius Lysias used Roman force to shut the riot and mob down immediately.

#### SOMETIMES THE CHURCH ACTS LIKE A MOB

In recent times Christians have had somewhat of a mob mentality towards not only people not like us, but even to other Christians.

- **We need to be cautious to not let frustration or disagreements turn us into people that don't act like the One we claim to follow!**

### A PLAN (ACTS 21:33-40)

#### ARRESTED THEN ASKED QUESTIONS

Claudius arrested Paul because he was the focus of the disturbance. After chaining him, he then asked the crowd who he was. The words of Agabus were coming true.

- Because the crowd was so violent, the soldiers took Paul to the barracks. As he was being led away, the crowd yelled, "Get rid of him" meaning kill him.

#### BEING TREATED LIKE JESUS

Extremely similar to Jesus being accused and beaten, Paul also gets the chance to speak to the man in charge. Paul speaks in Greek, not only surprising the commander, but leading him to believe he was a former terrorist from Egypt.

- Paul says he is a "Jewish man...a citizen of an important city."

#### THE CAT WILL COME OUT OF THE BAG LATER

In the next chapter Paul will temporarily escape death because he is a Roman citizen, but he has not told the commander this yet. After speaking Greek to the commander and getting permission to address the crowd, he turns and speaks Aramaic to the mob.

- God had a plan throughout this whole scenario, and it took courage to see it.

### TO FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST

- To follow Christ means **we're adopted into a family** that's deeper than flesh and blood.
- To follow Jesus means we are **willing not only to die for Him, but live for Him every day.**
- Being a Christian is about a *relationship* with God and others, not about religious practice.
- Following Jesus is a 24/7 commitment and **we cannot live two lives or compartmentalize our faith**
- God has a plan for all of us and it will take **trust, courage**, and sometimes **extreme sacrifice** to live it out. This is something that can be very difficult to understand.