

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 23RD, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

SAILING AWAY (ACTS 21:1–6)

"TORE OURSELVES AWAY FROM THEM"

Luke continues to emphasize just how difficult it was for leaders of Ephesus to let Paul go, as well as how difficult it was for him to leave them in Miletus.

- There was comfort and familiarity with the people in Ephesus, but God was not calling Paul to stay put. So, **as difficult as it was, Paul left on his journey to Jerusalem.**

"WE BOARDED AND SET SAIL"

Paul and company would have been traveling on a small ship known as a coastal ship. It would not have been large enough to sail the open seas. The small ship would have hugged the coast, stopping at every port.

- After stopping at Cos, Rhodes, and then Patara, Paul and the disciples boarded a ship that sailed straight for Phoenicia.

"CHAINS AND AFFLICTIONS ARE WAITING" (20:23)

Luke tells us that **"through the Spirit they [Tyrians] told Paul not to go to Jerusalem."**

- This does not mean that Paul was going against the will of God by continuing to Jerusalem, as some commentators believe. **The Spirit confirmed the dangers that awaited Paul, and they wanted to protect him.**

"STAYED THERE SEVEN DAYS"

This would have been Paul's first interaction with Believers in Tyre. Though Paul did plant the church there, it is possible that it was his persecution of Believers in Jerusalem that spread them out into this area (Acts 11:19).

- We see how these early persecuted Christians came full circle, **embracing the once-persecutor of the Church.**

"WE SAID FAREWELL TO ONE ANOTHER"

It was traditional for people in an area to walk with travelers to the outskirts of the city or the shoreline to see them away, but what took place at the shore of Tyre was uniquely Christian: **they knelt on the beach and prayed.**

- Understanding that **Paul would not be swayed from going forward to Jerusalem**, they hit their knees and prayed for him.

THE WILL OF GOD (ACTS 21:7–14)

"STAYED WITH THEM FOR A DAY"

Luke tells us that Paul and the others stayed with **"brothers and sisters"** in Ptolemais for a day before arriving in Caesarea.

- It seems that in virtually every city they stopped in, they were able to find Christians there. This shows the **rapid expansion of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.**

ARRIVAL AT CAESAREA

In Caesarea, they end up at the house of **"Philip the evangelist."** 20 years later, Philip is still found in the same area he went to after meeting with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:40).

- Luke calls him **"one of the Seven,"** referring to when Philip was one of the men entrusted to look after the Hellenistic widows during distribution (Acts 6:1–6).

"THIS MAN HAD FOUR VIRGIN DAUGHTERS"

Luke informs us that Philip now has four unmarried ("virgin") daughters who prophesied.

- They served to provide information about people and events that took place in the early Church. God could have used the ministering daughters of Philip to speak to Paul, but God had someone else in mind.

"A PROPHET NAMED AGABUS"

Agabus is the one who prophesied about the coming famine in Judea, prompting the church in Antioch to generously offer relief (Acts 11:27–30).

- As was common with prophets of this time, **Agabus came down from Judea, using Paul's belt to act out the danger that awaited him in Jerusalem** (v. 11).

"WE AND THE LOCAL PEOPLE PLEADED WITH HIM"

Luke is in essence confessing that he was part of trying to convince Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

- Paul silenced them and told them that he was **not only prepared to be bound but also to die for the name of Jesus** if necessary. Paul, like Jesus, had **"determined to journey to Jerusalem"** (Luke 9:51).

THE WARNINGS WERE TO PREPARE PAUL

Notice Agabus's prophecy never forbade Paul from going to Jerusalem but only told him what to expect when he went.

- Paul wasn't outside the will of God, and he wasn't ignoring the warnings. **He allowed the warnings to prepare him for what he would face.** The warnings were like those of Christ from those who cared about him (Matthew 16:22).

"THE LORD'S WILL BE DONE"

Luke and the others echoed the words of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane as they committed Paul and his outcome to the Lord.

- In the desert, Paul asked **the Lord what He wanted him to do** (Acts 9:6). The Spirit had been guiding him from Damascus to Jerusalem (Acts 19:21; 20:22), and **Paul would obey God's will even if it meant suffering.**

ARRIVING IN JERUSALEM (ACTS 21:15–25)

ANOTHER HOSPITABLE DISCIPLE

While in Jerusalem, Paul and the others would stay at the house of **"Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple."**

- Outside of the mention here, we do not have any other details about this disciple. Roughly 25 years had passed since the book of Acts began, and it's possible that Mnason was there in the beginning at Pentecost.

"HE REPORTED IN DETAIL"

Paul gave the leaders of Jerusalem, including James, the half-brother of Jesus, a full report on all that God had done through Paul for the Gentiles through his ministry.

- These Jewish Christians **glorified God for what He was doing among the Gentiles.** They could see the Gentile representatives' genuine love and commitment to Jesus.

"THEY ARE ALL ZEALOUS FOR THE LAW"

Paul learns of his reputation among many of the Jewish Christians who still held to Jewish laws and customs.

- The false rumors that were spread about Paul were that he had become anti-Jewish, essentially telling Christians that it was wrong for them to continue in Jewish laws and customs.

"THEY HAVE BEEN INFORMED ABOUT YOU"

Since the book of Romans had just been written by Paul, and Hebrews would be written 7–12 years later, Paul had to demonstrate what we now have canonized in Scripture.

- Paul sometimes **observed some of the old customs and laws, and he had no problem with others doing so, as long as they didn't feel like it made them more right with God.**

"SO WHAT IS TO BE DONE?"

So that **"everyone will know that what they were told about [Paul] amounts to nothing,"** the leaders advised Paul to join and sponsor four Jewish Christians who had taken a similar Nazarite vow to Paul's in Acts 18:18–21.

- True to Paul's desire to **"become all things to all people,"** he did not object to the leader's recommendation (1 Corinthians 9:19–23).

"WITH REGARD TO THE GENTILES"

Verse 25 shows that the Jerusalem elders agreed that Paul participating in Jewish customs had nothing to do with the Gentiles who believe in Jesus.

- Through grace, the Gentiles were **free to abstain** from Jewish customs and laws. It was that same grace that gave Jewish Christians the **freedom to observe.**

THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

- Paul and others in Scripture never sought suffering. They only sought to do the Lord's will, even if that meant suffering.
- Jesus warns us about taking the easy path (Matthew 7:13–14).
- The Bible teaches that a life of faith in Christ requires facing hardships while not conforming to cultural norms (Romans 12:2).

WHERE HE LEADS, I WILL FOLLOW

- What leads us, and who/what are we following?
- Are we led by emotion or our hearts (Jeremiah 17:9)?
- Is what we are following leading into or out of the will of God?
- We must surrender to His will and be obedient to His Word.