

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 23RD, 2026 // THE BOOK OF ACTS

CONNECTED (ACTS 21:1-6) "WE TORE OURSELVES AWAY"

The goodbye to the church leaders at Ephesus was harder than most goodbyes. They would not see Paul again, and Luke says they had to tear themselves away from their friends and continue the journey.

- Paul had been in Ephesus for over three years, and we would expect him to develop deep relationships with Believers in that city.

"WE SOUGHT OUT THE DISCIPLES"

As they sailed near the shoreline, they saw several familiar cities where the church was growing and made some evening visits.

- Boarding a larger ship, they crossed the Mediterranean Sea and stopped in Tyre for a few days. They immediately sought out disciples in the area.

"THEY TOLD PAUL NOT TO GO"

Paul and his companions were there for only seven days, but in that time, they developed relationships with the Believers in Tyre.

- The Holy Spirit revealed to the disciples how Paul would be received in Jerusalem, so they encouraged him not to go.
- **They shared because they cared.**

CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

Once the ship was unloaded, it was time to continue their journey.

- We see the depth of their connection with the Believers in Tyre when Luke shares that "all of them, with their wives and children" followed them to the ship.
- **Believers can develop unusually deep relationships in a short time because of our relationship with Christ.**

GOD'S WILL (ACTS 21:7-14) CONNECTING TO MORE BELIEVERS

They greeted brothers and sisters in Ptolemais and stayed with them for a day.

- Even though Paul was pressing to get to Jerusalem, he continues to take time to connect with Believers on his way.
- **In our busy lives, we may miss many opportunities to connect with others. We can stay on mission and still take time to listen and encourage those we meet along the way.**

PHILIP'S HOUSE

When they enter Caesarea, they enter the house of Philip the evangelist. Philip was sent out from Jerusalem, appointed as a deacon, and gifted as an evangelist.

- His daughters were gifted and committed to proclaiming God's word, building up Believers, and offering deep spiritual insight and encouragement to the local church.
- **Gifts aren't gender specific and should be used for God's glory.**

AGABUS'S PROPHECY

Agabus enters the scene from Judea, probably aware of the tension in Jerusalem, and has a message from the Holy Spirit.

- He takes Paul's belt and demonstrates what will happen to Paul when he goes to Jerusalem.
- **The Holy Spirit may reveal the challenges of following God's will. Would we continue if we knew what it might cost to be faithful next week? Next month?**

THEY PLEADED WITH PAUL

After Agabus's revelation, Paul's traveling companions and the local disciples all pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.

- They loved him and didn't want him to come to any harm. They believed the prophecy but didn't understand the reason for the prophecy.
- **Once God's plan was revealed, they thought they could prevent it. What they needed to do was prepare for it.**

"THE LORD'S WILL BE DONE"

Paul was committed to his calling, and the pleading of his friends was breaking his heart.

- He reminded them that he was ready to suffer whatever was in his future for the name of the Lord Jesus. He could not be persuaded to do anything less.
- **We don't suffer for suffering's sake. We endure and remain faithful to glorify God and for our good. Not everyone will understand, but God's will matters to us.**

FREEDOM (ACTS 21:15-25)

A WARM WELCOME

They finally arrive in Jerusalem and stay with one of the early disciples. It seems that every Believer they meet is happy to see Paul and his entire group.

- On their second day in Jerusalem, they connect with James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem, along with the all the elders.
- This was Paul's chance to share what God had done over the past few years through his ministry.

PRAISE GOD! BUT SOMETHING ELSE.

When they heard it, they glorified God.

- They also affirmed that God had been working in the hearts of the Jews, and thousands had come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah.
- The problem was the reputation Paul had gained as someone teaching Jews to abandon the law completely.
- **What we do and what people think we do may be two completely different things. What are we willing to do to help them understand?**

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

James shares an idea that may help the others see that Paul still obeys the law.

- Paul could walk along with and help four men complete their Nazarite vow by paying for their sacrifices and haircuts.
- **Paul was willing because he knew and taught that salvation is through Christ alone. Customs, traditions, festivals, and ceremonies aren't a part of salvation, but they can be used to glorify God and reach people.**

WITH REGARD TO THE GENTILES

James reminds everyone that the issue of Jesus alone had been settled in Chapter 15.

- Every Believer had been given freedom from the law, but that freedom also allowed them to observe the law with the right perspective.
- **Paul offers a powerful picture of Christian liberty and demonstrates spiritual maturity. He's willing to do anything for the sake of the gospel, as long as he doesn't compromise it.**

DIFFERENT

- People are different.
- **Different doesn't have to be difficult.**
- **Differences can be more difficult when we don't take the time to learn WHY we are different. Sometimes, our differences will make our relationships stronger. *Vive la différence.***

FLEXIBLE

- We must be flexible when connecting.
- **Flexible may mean compromise.**
- **Compromise is essential, but it becomes a problem when we compromise the gospel or participate in sin, and we tell ourselves it's so we can reach others. What message does that really send? So, what is the real compromise?**

IDENTITY

- Everyone has an identity.
- **Some believe in themselves while others identify with something/someone else.**
- **When we identify with ourselves, we believe others must become like us to understand and believe what we believe. Identifying with Christ gives us a heart of understanding and compassion that never compromises the message but is willing to be humble for the sake of others. Are we too proud to listen? What have we compromised lately?**