

# Acts 21

## Acts 21.1-6

V1 – The third "we" passage (v 1-18)

- "we...parted" – literally translated: We tore ourselves away
- "Straight course" – running with prevailing winds (NE)
- There is a spiritual message from this expression – Gospel preachers are always to "run a straight course" in the preaching of the gospel

V2 – They found a ship sailing to Phoenicia

V3 – They passed Cyprus and saw it on the port (left) side

V4 – Paul knew that there were disciples at Tyre (*Acts 11.19*)

- The Diaspora (the scattering of the Christians because of the persecution of the church) was all across Phoenicia
- **Had Paul been warned before about trouble at Jerusalem?** Yes - See *Acts 20.23*
- A good reference: *Luke 9.51* – Jesus resolutely set his face toward Jerusalem (the same thing that Paul did)

V5 – He had only been there 7 days, but knew them like old friends

- **Any personal experiences similar to this?** Yes, many times while traveling, we have all found a congregation in some other state or country, but we felt right at home
- There were two very smooth beaches out to the fort that Alexander the Great built to attack Tyre in 332 BC – they knelt on the beach

V6 – "They returned home again" – These must have been lonely words for Luke to record, after so much traveling

## Acts 21.7-14

V7 – On to Ptolemais, where Paul again greeted the brethren

V8 – **Why is this person called "Philip the evangelist"?** To distinguish him from the Apostle Philip

- **In what chapter did we first hear of Philip?** *Acts 6.5* – he was one of the seven appointed to take care of the Greek-speaking widows at the church at Jerusalem (these were forerunners of deacons)
- **His next incident?** He converted the Ethiopian eunuch (*Acts 8*)
- *Acts 8.40* – (in Caesarea) – *Acts 21.8* – still there 20 years later
- **What does this say about those who oppose "located" preachers?** They are wrong
- A faithful preacher can work at one congregation for many years, if he continues to study the Bible faithfully and presents sound messages from the Word of God
- The emphasis must be on the Scriptures, not on jokes, "current" issues, and popular messages
- So Philip worked in Samaria for at least 20 years
- There are some preachers who have only written 200 sermons in their careers, and when they have gone through those sermons, they move on to another congregation – that is a real tragedy for the Lord's work

**V 9** – **Other good women in Acts?** Lydia, Priscilla, Dorcas (or Tabitha) who was raised from the dead by Peter  
-Now, the four daughters of Philip  
-Later members of the church (such as these four daughters of Philip) might have furnished Luke material for the *Gospel of Luke*  
-Paul was later imprisoned 2 years in Caesarea

**V 10** – **Where have we met Agabus before?** He had prophesied the famine (*Acts 11.28*)

**V 11** – **-Prophecy of Agabus?** That Paul would be bound in Jerusalem and delivered over to the Gentiles

**V 12** – **What was the reaction of the local Christians to this prophecy?** They begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem

**V 13** - **Why was Paul still determined to go to Jerusalem?** To deliver the money from other congregations to help with the famine  
**-Do we have such resolution today with the challenges and opportunities that God sets before us?**

**V 14** – Echo of the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (*Luke 22.42*)

**Acts 21.15-16** (end of Third Missionary Journey)

Major events in Third Missionary Journey:

1. Raising of Eutychus at Troas
2. Establishing the church at Ephesus (and all the 7 churches of Asia)
3. The writing of *Romans* and *1-2 Corinthians* during this trip

**V 15** – They went up to Jerusalem to meet with the elders there

**V 16** – **What was the first compliment that Luke paid to Mnason?** "A disciple of long standing..."  
**-The next compliment?** He showed hospitality to Paul and the missionary party

**Acts 21.17-26** – **The Beginning of the Fourth Missionary Journey**

**-What prediction had been made for Paul concerning Jerusalem?** Much persecution

**V 17** – **Why were they received gladly by the church?** The donations from other congregations

**V 18** – They went in to see James

**-Why was James still in Jerusalem?** Possibly to help train men to go out into the rest of the world and to help train men to be elders

**V 19** – **Last time Paul was in Jerusalem?** For the council in *Acts 15* between the First and Second Missionary Journeys

**V 20** – Notice: The Christians glorified God, not the preacher (Paul)

*-1 Cor. 3.6 – I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth*

**V 21 – Had Paul ever taught that the Jewish Christians should no longer circumcise their baby**

**boys?** Absolutely not – this charge against Paul was totally false

**-Whom had Paul actually circumcised to conform to local custom?** Timothy (*Acts 16.3*)

**-So did Paul preach against circumcision?** No, but it was just a social custom

**-Do we do things today to conform to social customs?** Ties, dresses, clothing in general, other local customs, etc.

*-Acts 6.14* – This was the same charge against Stephen ("He will change the Law of Moses")

**V 22-24** – Tact is the key – the Jerusalem elders did not want a confrontation – the same with Paul at Ephesus

**-Other examples?** Timothy was circumcised (*Acts 16.3*)

-Paul entered a temporary Nazirite vow (*Num. 6.1-27, Acts 18.8*)

*-Acts 18.18* – possibly already under this vow

**Principles vs. Tact:**

*Matt. 5.25*

*Acts 21.20*

*1 Cor. 3.6*

***1 Cor. 9.20-23* - Read**

**V 25 – Where were these instructions originally found? (*Acts 15*)**

**V 26 – We try to conform to local customs, as long as they do not violate our Christian principles**

See these Scriptures:

*Romans 14.21*

*1 Cor. 9.20-23*

*1 Cor. 10.23-24* – All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient

*Gospel Advocate Commentary on Acts*, p. 342:

*"The above quotation [1 Cor. 10.23-24] describes the conduct of Paul here as elsewhere; he never acted from mere policy, but was guided by principle. We are to understand his conduct in light of the above. Since the law of Moses contained some ceremonial rites, these could be observed for the sake of peace and harmony without violating a principle."*

-H. Leo Boles

**Acts 21.27-36**

**V 27 – Jews from Asia (interesting – a reminder of Paul himself)**

-They pursued Paul from town to town

-Also a reminder of Paul himself before he was converted

**V 28 – What charges were brought against him?**

1. He preaches against the Old Testament

2. He had blasphemed and defiled the temple

Remember that #2 was used against Jesus (*Mark 16.58*) and against Stephen (*Acts 6.13-14*)

**V 29 – Were they correct about Trophimus? No, too hasty**

-There was the death penalty for any Gentile who entered the temple

**V 30 – Were they planning to kill him? Yes**

- Why do people like being in a mob when something evil is being done?** There is no individual responsibility; the participants are all cowards
- Examples: To Kill a Mockingbird (mob in Jackson County, Alabama)
- also remember the mob scene in Huckleberry Finn

**V 31** – Roman commander came (he was in charge of 1000 troops)

**V 32** – **Why take troops?** A show of force

**V 33** – Admiration for Roman Empire at this time – they did keep order in the world (like British in 19<sup>th</sup> Century)

- Why was Paul put in chains (v 38)?** They thought he could have been one of the local assassins

**V 34** – **Barracks?** The castle of Antonia, overlooking Jerusalem

**V 35** – **Why did the soldiers carry Paul up the stairs?** Because of the violent attitude of the mob

**V 36** – "Away with him" – similar to cries for the life of Jesus (*Luke 23.18, John 19.15*)

- Just like at Ephesus: "*I fought wild animals there,*" Paul said in *1 Cor. 15.32*

## **Acts 21.37-40**

**V 37** – **What impressed Roman cohort?** Paul spoke in the Greek language

- This would have been Koine Greek (it was the language of business and the common people, not the classical Greek of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle)

**V 38** – Assassins (literally, "short swords") – a secret group trying to overthrow the Roman government

**V 39** – **How did Paul appeal to the crowd?** By stating that he was a Jew from Tarsus, Cilicia, a significant city for the Jews

**V 40** – Paul spoke in Jewish Aramaic (notice that he was again conforming to local customs by speaking in Aramaic, not pure Hebrew or Greek)

- What else did Paul do as he prepared to speak to the people?** Motioned with his hand
- See *Acts 12.17* – a custom of the First Century and a gesture that seemed to calm down the crowd

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