

For the Name of the Lord Jesus

Acts 21:1-20a

Introduction

We've been seeing that Acts is the story of how Christ the King builds his Church. What we're learning each week is how King Jesus is a brilliant strategist. No matter what happens in the book of Acts and therefore, no matter what happens in your life, ends up falling directly into God's master plan for building his Church. Our passage today is about Paul's journey to Jerusalem which is going to help you and I understand the journey that God has called us to.

1 The Facts

Did you notice the meticulous details of Paul's trip to Jerusalem?

Complete itinerary, including 9 towns, various people, and what seems like meaningless details.

For instance:

- v. 3 they sailed around the left of Cyprus
- v. 3 the ship had to unload its cargo in Tyre
- v. 4. they stayed there for 7 days

What's the point of all these details?

Many people try to say that the Bible is a book of myths and legends. But the Christian view of the Bible is that it's a historically accurate book given to us by the supernatural power of God as he superintended its writing through men like Luke and the Apostle Paul.

Have you ever stopped to think that with the abundance of details Luke gives and the names he names, how many opportunities that would have created for him to be exposed if he was just making things up?

Acts (part 2 of a Luke's 2 volume work)

Luke 1:1-4 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

*Ultimately, your view of Jesus will determine your view of Scripture. The Christian view of the Bible is that Jesus prepared certain men to accurately convey his word and supernaturally guaranteed its perfection through the power of the Holy Spirit. God gave his word to special men and he gave them his Spirit to ensure that his words would be perfectly preserved

Proverbs 30:5 Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

So #1, we've been given these abundance of facts so you and I could be certain that the Word of God and the gospel are true.

#2 The Fellowship

Not only does Luke document many facts of Paul's journey, but he also documents the warm fellowship Paul had with believers from many different parts of the known world at that time.

When I think of the Apostle Paul:

Theological genius, full of passion, grit, boldness, courage, he never backed down from a confrontation, on multiple occasions he rebuked churches when it was appropriate.

In addition to all those things, Luke's travels with Paul gives us great insight to the warmth of Paul's heart and the tenderness of his relationships with other believers.

This really is a testimony to the power of God to change hearts and lives! We can't overstate how great Paul's hatred was toward Christians before he himself was converted. In his own testimony he continually reminded people of the fact that he

“persecuted [Christians] to the death.” Acts 9 says he was “breathing out threats and murder against the disciples” just before Jesus overpowered him on the road to Damascus and gave him a new heart.

And with this new heart began to love and cherish the family of Jesus. Luke gives us these glimpses of the tenderness of his relationships with other believers. For instance right at the end of ch. 20:

Acts 20:36-38 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 And there was ***much weeping*** on the part of all; they ***embraced*** Paul and ***kissed*** him, 38 being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

v3 Tyre (spends 7days with disciples)

Acts 21:5-6 When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, and ***they all, with wives and children, accompanied us*** until we were outside the city. ***And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed 6 and said farewell to one another.*** Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

v. 7 arrived at Ptolemais... greeted the ***brothers*** and stayed with them for one day...
(brothers – family, closer to believers than we are to our own blood kin)

v. 9 They arrived in Caesarea and entered the house of Phillip (one of the 7) stayed there for many days
Back to Acts 8 (deacons – Phillip and Stephen/martyr)

Agabus’ prophecy

Look at how his friends reacted

Acts 21:12-13 When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

The great beauty of Christianity is that we were created for intimate fellowship with the triune God and with each other. Do you realize how critical our fellowship as believers is to our spiritual health?

This is one of the reasons why we here at The Road want to be very intentional about cultivating vibrant, deep, intimate relationships with each other as believers.

If you come here and you just drop in from time to time, if you just come and check off the church box, you are missing so much of the blessing of life as a Christian.

Can I be frank? If you’re not plugged in and firmly rooted into the life of a local body of believers, at best you are in spiritual danger and at worst you’re caught in the jaws and claws of Satan. You know it’s the sheep who are close to the shepherd and close to the other sheep who are safest. You are most vulnerable when you’re not connected to the life of the flock and the protection of the shepherd.

There’s at least two reasons why we need the close fellowship of other believers.

1. You need the benefits and blessings of the life and faith of believers? The Bible tells us that our God is a God who is in the midst of his people. He has a close intimate relationship with his people. So it’s just wrong to think that we can be close to God without being close to his people.
2. Do you realize, if you’re a believer, the body of Christ needs you. God has given you gifts and talents that are critical to the health of the body. So when you’re not connected to the life of a family of faith, you’re not only doing spiritual harm to yourself, you’re also doing spiritual harm to the rest of the body.

Can I give you a test???

Do you desire to be with God’s family, to be involved in family life... If you don’t have an inward desire that is motivating you to make time with your spiritual family a priority, then you need what I’m saying most of all.

I want to plead with you right now, It’s a big mistake to wait until you feel like it before you obey the Scripture’s teaching on being a part of the body. Right now, if you don’t feel like it, I want to encourage you not to walk by your feelings, but walk in the light of the word of God. Walk in obedience and plead with God that the feelings will follow.

Sunday mornings are great, but I want to encourage everyone of you to get plugged into our Life groups. Sunday morning is not enough by itself to supply the spiritual needs that we have. I love when we come and we have met with our God and I look around here and everything's put up and you guys are just lingering around in the afterglow of worship, just loving each other, and enjoying each other. But you can't only spend an hour and a half of your 168 hour week with your spiritual family and expect to be spiritually healthy.

So I'd like to ask you, for the sake of your own spiritual health, and for the sake of the spiritual health of the people sitting around you that you would be fully committed to sharing life together as believers here at The Road. And my friend, if for whatever reason you're not able to do that, please find a believing community where you can.

*** Risk being hurt...

* The sweet fellowship Paul had with other believers was crucial to his success...
Jason and I need you!

An issue – 19:21 Paul was resolved in the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem

But here in our ch 21:4 it says that the believers in Tyre were telling Paul through the Spirit not to go on to Jerusalem. On the surface it looks like the Spirit is telling Paul one thing and the believers at Tyre the opposite. What do we make of this?

1. Because he's God, the Holy Spirit couldn't be lying or misleading
2. Because he's God, the Holy Spirit couldn't have made a mistake with one party
3. Because Paul and the believers at Tyre were imperfect people, one of them could have been mistaken concerning the prophecy.

Let me show you how I try solve this – Probably the most important rule of Biblical interpretation is that Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. So, when we come to a passage that's hard to understand, the first thing we need to do is look to other parts of Scripture to help us interpret the passage in question.

1. We saw (19:21) that Paul was resolved in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem
2. Acts 20:22-23 And now, behold, *I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit*, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the **Holy Spirit testifies** to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.
3. Go back down to vs. 10-14 and the prophecy of Agabus. Agabus did not say that the Spirit was saying that Paul shouldn't go to Jerusalem, he was simply saying that Paul was going to be imprisoned and suffer. That led the people there to plead with Paul not to go.

Therefore, it's most likely that what happened in Tyre was similar to what was happening here. The believers in Tyre were probably assuming that the Spirit's testimony that Paul was going to suffer if he went to Jerusalem meant that the Spirit was saying he shouldn't go. But here's the danger of reading too much into the Spirit's revelation, they were reading their own feelings into it.

Ok, so we've seen #1 the facts Luke shares with us indicate the reliability of Scripture, and #2 We've seen that Paul had deep intimate fellowship with other believers. Now, let's look at

#3 The Footprints

It's very interesting to see in Paul's journey that he is following in the foot prints of Jesus. Look again at Acts 21:13-14 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

As part of God's plan, God was leading Paul to Jerusalem

And whatever God's will was, Paul was willing to submit to it even if it meant suffering, imprisonment, or death.

But... There was one greater than Paul who God also led up to Jerusalem

When the time had come, Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem (Lu. 9:51)

Only Jesus was just risking imprisonment or death, Jesus obeyed the will of the Father knowing that going to Jerusalem, not only meant he would die, but that he would suffer and unimaginably horrible death. Knowing exactly what he would suffer, for you and me...

He went...

Like Paul, you and I have a journey to make. It might not be to Jerusalem, but our God has called us to follow him out into the unknown. He's called us to obedience in difficult circumstances and even to suffer like Paul for the sake of his name. And you're never going to understand what he's calling you to do, and you're never going to have the power to obey him, until you've tasted and seen the power of the cross. Because of Christ's sacrifice, on our journey, we have been given glorious facts, wonderful truths in his word to guide us. We've been given the fellowship of the saints to help and encourage us on our journey. And you and I have the privilege, like Paul, of following in the foot prints of Jesus.

Sweetly, Lord, have we heard Thee calling,
Come, follow Me!
And we see where Thy footprints falling
Lead us to Thee.

Do you know what the most wonderful thing is about the foot prints of Jesus? They lead us to him.

I want to call on you today