



Christians in our culture have many people, possessions, and comforts competing for first place in our lives. And while people we love, the stuff we own, and the privileges we have, influence our decisions, today we are reminded that the Christian's first priority is to please the King above anyone or anything.

Paul's deepest desire

2 Corinthians 5:6-9 (NET) ⁶ Therefore we are always full of courage, and we know that as long as we are alive here on earth we are absent from the Lord—⁷ for we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Thus we are full of courage and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So then whether we are alive or away, **we make it our ambition to please him.**

BIG TRUTH: *Please the King above anyone or anything.*

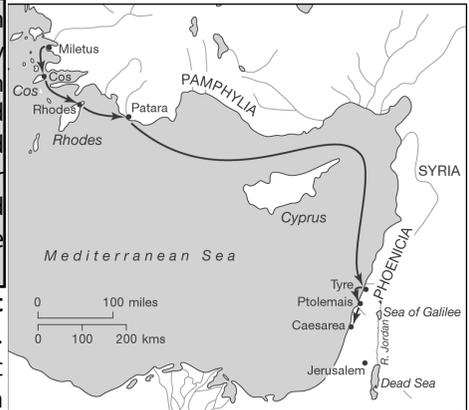
Acts 21:4-6 (NET) ⁴ After we located the disciples [in Tyre], we stayed there seven days. They repeatedly told Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.⁵ When our time was over, we left and went on our way. All of them, with their wives and children, accompanied us outside of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying,⁶ we said farewell to one another. Then we went aboard the ship, and they returned to their own homes.

So the question is: Did **the Spirit** tell Paul **not to set foot in Jerusalem**? If so, then Paul is disobeying. More likely, these people rightly warn about what will happen **through the Spirit** (i.e. God had given them insight into what will occur). However, **THEY**, not God, are warning Paul not to go.

Acts 21:7-9 (NET) ⁷ We continued the voyage from Tyre and arrived at Ptolemais, and when we had greeted the brothers, we stayed with them for one day. ⁸ On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. ⁹ (He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.)

Caesarea is the place where Peter had previously shared the message of Jesus with Cornelius, the Gentile centurion and his family (Acts 10). It was a strategic Roman port on the Mediterranean Sea, 65 miles northwest of Jerusalem - named in honor of Augustus Caesar.¹

Early in his ministry Paul preached about Jesus in Jerusalem, but when his life was threatened he was whisked away to seaport of Caesarea to send him far off (Acts 9:29-30).



¹ Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*; John and Acts, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 384.

Caesarea is where **Philip the evangelist** was living. He was **one of the seven** men who was chosen to serve Greek speaking Jewish widows in Jerusalem (a man greatly used by God - i.e. Ethiopian eunuch). Philip had **four** godly **daughters who prophesied**. We don't know what they said or where they said them, but these godly ladies were used by God to speak His truth. At this point they were **unmarried**, more focused on pleasing God than finding a husband.

What a privilege it must have been to spend time talking with so many who had made it their life purpose to **please the King above anyone or anything!**

Willing to Suffer for Jesus

Acts 21:10-14 (NET)¹⁰ While we [this likely includes Luke] remained there for a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ He came to us, took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it, and said, "The Holy Spirit says this: 'This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will tie up the man whose belt this is, and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

¹² When we heard this, both we and the local people begged him not to go up to Jerusalem.

¹³ Then Paul replied, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be tied up, but **even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.**" ¹⁴ Because he could not be persuaded, we said no more except, "The Lord's will be done."

Once again, Paul had to wrestle with what pleasing people or pleasing his KING. In our day, many people believe God's ultimate will is happiness, instead of holiness.

What pleases God is when we are HOLY & do what it takes to further the Gospel message, even when it costs us something.

Dr. Luke (the guy writing this account) notes **we said no more except, "The Lord's will be done."** So at some point, Luke and other traveling companions TRIED to get Paul to change course, but he would not.

Remember what God told Ananias way back in the day when Paul was converted?

Acts 9:15-16 (NET)¹⁵ ...this man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel.¹⁶ **For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.**

Paul's goal was not to please other people or please himself, but to please God.

Galatians 1:10 (NET)¹⁰ Am I now trying to gain the approval of people, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ!

What could God do with a PILE or PEOPLE like THAT!!!!????? People who chose to....

Please the King above anyone or anything.

Paul would not be turned from his focus, so...

Acts 21:15-17 (NET) ¹⁵ After these days we got ready and **started up to Jerusalem.** ¹⁶ Some of the disciples from Caesarea came along with us too, and brought us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple from the earliest times, with whom we were to stay. ¹⁷ When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us gladly.

The brothers as much of the church does not trust Paul nor know he has arrived (21:21-22).² Instead, these are the believers expecting Paul's arrival & likely providing him a place to stay, welcomed them.

Acts 21:18-20 (NET) ¹⁸ The next day Paul went in with us to see James, and all the elders were there.¹⁹ When Paul had greeted them, he began to explain in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ When they heard this, they praised God.

James (or Jacob) was one of the Jewish **elders** (overseers), the Jewish half-brother of Jesus, and a leader in the Jerusalem church.

- **Jerusalem** is significant as it's the place where Jesus was tried, mocked, beaten, crucified, buried, and raised. It's also the place where Paul (before trusting Jesus), began his assault to imprison & kill followers of Jesus. * It is possible these men had family members imprisoned or killed because of Paul years before.

So here is Paul, the former arch-enemy, meeting with **all the elders** of Jerusalem - now Jewish brothers in the Lord Jesus and partners in the Gospel ministry.

* Although Dr. Luke doesn't mention it here, Paul brought a gift from the Gentile churches (Romans 15:25-31) to the Jewish church in Jerusalem, to help care for those facing financial difficulty.

After hearing the stories of what **God had done among the Gentiles**, and being blessed by the Gentile converts who appreciated the faithful Jews who brought them the message, **they praised God**.

Paul was now IN JERUSALEM & the persecution Paul had been warned of was just around the corner, but until then the brothers celebrated what God was doing all over the known world as believers were **taking the Gospel to the planet in the power of the Spirit**.

As we've seen over and over again in this ancient writing, while many listened to the Gospel message, others stiff-armed the message & the messengers. Thankfully, like Paul, those messengers had a higher aim than pleasing people. They were determined to...

Please the King above anyone or anything.

What is keeping you from being able to say that with your life?

1. **Are you convinced of the Christian claims?** GOD, MAN, SIN, JESUS, JUDGMENT
KNOWING the Christian claims & TRUSTING CHRIST are 2 different things.
2. **Have you turned from sin and TRUSTED Jesus?**
No one comes to the kingdom unless like a child - TRUST HIM.
3. **Seeking the Lord Jesus and walking folks who encourage you to grow in Him?**
Paul didn't do it alone & you aren't intended to either.
4. **Praying & pursuing opportunities to share Jesus with others, even if it could cost you?**
WHO are you praying for & looking for opportunities to share with?