

# A DEEPER DIVE

Acts 21: 1-16  
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Email me, Steve Callaway, at [stvc13@gmail.com](mailto:stvc13@gmail.com).

***Micah 6:8 – He has shown you, oh mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. (NIV)***

Acts Chapter 21 – Part 1

**Heading to Jerusalem** – Have you had your heart ripped out by having to say goodbye to someone? Saying goodbye to friends, relatives, even pets can be emotionally excruciating. Note how Luke starts this chapter. Go back to the end of chapter 20 and remind yourself of the scene that ends that chapter. Paul and the others must follow the lead of the Holy Spirit and continue their journey. But that doesn't mean it's going to be easy. The beginning of this chapter shows us that it's okay to grieve and to mourn any kind of parting. It also shows us that we must continue in the faith no matter what the personal cost. This section should also remind us that one day this kind of parting will only be a distant memory and we will no longer have to weep at any kind of parting. Give thanks to God for this reminder, and ask him for the strength to keep going in your faith.

**Tyre** – The travelers spend a week in Tyre. FF Bruce remarks that, "They knew that there was a Christian church in Tyre; it had been founded as a result of the Hellenistic dispersion that followed Stephen's death." When Paul and the others were with the brothers and sisters in Tyre, what did they say to Paul?

**Phillip** – I wonder what the reunion with Philip and his family was like. Read what Luke says in verse 8. Read about Philip in Acts 6 and Acts 8. Luke doesn't supply us with any details. What do you think this reunion would have been like?

**Agabus** – Remember what Paul says in Acts 20 verse 20 and 21. Here in Acts chapter 21, we have Paul getting some messages from people about Jerusalem. Read verse 10-14 and summarize what is happening in this scene.

Who is Agabus and what does he do? Read Acts 11:27-29 to review another time Agabus prophesied.  
What is the reaction of Paul's fellow travelers?  
What does Paul say in response?

This scene ends with Luke saying, in verse 14, "When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, 'The Lord's will be done'" (NIV). What role does Luke evidently take in this scene (note his pronoun use). So, the question here is, is Paul right in being determined to go to Jerusalem? If you were convinced that you should do something, but the Pastor and elders of your church said don't do it, what would you do? In chapter 20, verse 22 what does Paul say about why he's going to Jerusalem? What does he say, in verse 23, will happen to him there? How is this verse confirmed by Agabus? Note that Agabus performs an act, but he does not conclude that Paul should not go to Jerusalem.

Bruce comments that Agabus' act is similar to acts in 1 Kings 11:29-33; Isaiah 20:1-6; and Ezekiel 4:1-3. Why do you think at times God has his prophets not just speak prophecies, but to convey a prophetic idea with a deed, not a word?

This scene reminds me of a chapter from the book *When the Church was Young*. Ignatius (lived during the early 100's) was arrested. He was "sentenced to fight wild beasts in Rome for the amusement of the mob." Ignatius was, "chained to a squad of soldiers, He called them 'ten leopards'--men who were brutal and crude. They marched him across Asia Minor ... in chains all the way...to Troas." On his way to Rome (he went by ship from Troas to Rome) he wrote a number of letters to various believers and churches. In his letter to the church of Rome he, "begs the Roman Christians not to interfere with his martyrdom through some misguided love." Ignatius writes, "I am voluntarily dying for God--if, that is, you do not interfere. I plead with you, do not do me an unseasonable kindness. Let me be fodder for wild beasts--that is how I can get to God. I am God's wheat and I am being ground by the teeth of the wild beasts to make a pure loaf for Christ." Ignatius knew full well what was in store for him in Rome, but he also knew he was human. He added, "If, when I arrive, I make a different plea, pay no attention to me!"

So, Paul, and Ignatius, and no doubt many Christian martyrs through the ages, and even today, know what is in store for him. But, as Paul said, he was "compelled by the Spirit" (NIV) to go to Rome. Give thanks to the Lord that we in our country are not facing this kind of persecution, but also pray that the Lord would give you the strength to persevere through any kind of persecution whenever it appears.

**Mnason the Cypriote** – Luke ends this section with one last stop over before they get to Jerusalem. Luke says that Mnason was an "early disciple." Bruce says that scholars think that "Mnason was Luke's authority for the episodes of Aeneas and Dorcas" (Acts 9: 32-43). There are many stories in the book of Acts that are relayed by Luke, but he was not present to witness the things he describes. So, he must have gotten the information from sources who were present. The idea that Mnason was an early disciple, and likely had stories of events that Luke had not witnessed makes sense. What do you think of Luke relying on others to write the book of Acts? Sometimes I think we have the opinion that since Luke wrote it he must have been witness to all of the events he describes.

**Epilogue** – Warren Wiersbe says that when Agabus prophesied over Paul about what his fate would be in Jerusalem, "Paul was 'bound in the spirit' and willing to be bound and slain for Christ's sake. 'I am ready!' was certainly Paul's watchword: ready to preach the Gospel anywhere (Romans 1:15); ready to die for Christ at any time (Acts 21:13); ready to be offered and meet the Lord (2 Timothy 4:6)." It seems somewhat easy to talk about martyrdom in the abstract; it seems it would be a wholly different thing to knowingly go into a situation where your martyrdom was prophesied and assured. For Paul, this idea was not an abstraction, but a reality which was confirmed to him by the Holy Spirit and by the various prophecies he received. But, as Wiersbe says, his watchword was, "I'm ready!" In Acts 21:14 Paul's friends, after failing to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem said, "The Lord's will be done." Pray that you have the attitude of Paul and that when you have an opportunity to share the gospel message, you take advantage of that with an "I'm ready" attitude. Likewise, when you are confronted with opposition or persecution you can say, "I'm ready!" to face it.