

### 73. Paul Was Warned of Coming Imprisonment

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize false teachers and self-seeking leaders so that they can protect weaker Christians from deception. False teachers and self-seeking leaders are really only seeking personal gain. It may be money or it may be power that they seek. However, their goal is not to bring glory to Christ. Instead, their goal is to control people for personal gain. In our topic today, we are going to see that Paul began his trip from Ephesus to Jerusalem. Along the way, he was warned that he was going to be imprisoned in the near future.

Acts 21:1-6 says, “Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos, the following *day* to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo. And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed. When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.” We see that Paul was traveling on a ship that stopped at each of the main cities along the way.

However, when Paul was at the city of Patara, he and the team transferred to a larger ship that was sailing straight for Phoenicia. We saw in an earlier topic that Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost if possible. Acts 20:16 says, “For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.” The main city of Phoenicia was the city of Tyre and that was where the larger ship was to deliver part of its cargo. Along the way, they saw the island of Cyprus; they did not stop on that island, but went on the left (north) side of the island. Then, the ship continued on and landed at Tyre so the ship could unload its cargo. As a result, the ship stayed at Tyre for seven days.

Paul and those with him found that there were disciples living in Tyre and so they were able to spend the time with them. The Holy Spirit revealed to these believers at Tyre that Paul would experience suffering if he went to Jerusalem. As a result, they encouraged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Paul already knew that he would suffer in Jerusalem, but he was prepared to finish the work that the Lord had for him there. Earlier, Paul had told the elders from Ephesus in Acts 20:22-24, ““And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”” Paul was not afraid of chains. His concern was to finish the ministry that the Lord had given to him.

When the ship was ready to leave Tyre, the disciples in Tyre, including the women and children,

all accompanied him to the ship. Before Paul got on the ship, this group all knelt down together and had a time of prayer. Then, Paul and those traveling with him boarded the ship and the disciples from Tyre returned to their homes. The ship then traveled from Tyre to Ptolemais and then on to Caesarea.

Acts 21:7-12 says, “And when we had finished *our* voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. On the next *day* we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his *own* hands and feet, and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.’” Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.” Even though the ship only stopped at Ptolemais for one day, Paul and those with him used that opportunity to greet the Christians who lived in that city.

Ptolemais was only about 25 miles from Caesarea. When Paul and those traveling with him came to Caesarea, they stayed with Philip, the evangelist. The word translated “evangelist” is only used three times in the New Testament and means *to share the good news of the Gospel*. Ephesians 4:11-12 explains the ministry of an evangelist. Those verses say, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Here, we see that an evangelist is an elder that is a part of a church leadership team that God gives to each church to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. The evangelist is to equip the saints to share the Gospel.

In Acts 8, we see that Philip had taken the Gospel to Samaria. Then, he had shared the Gospel with the eunuch from Ethiopia. Acts 8:39-40 says, “Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.” We see that Philip had then spent many years in that city equipping the Christians to share the Gospel, including his four virgin daughters that prophesied. In 1 Corinthians 14:3, we read, “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.” Philip had shown his daughters how to share the Word of God as they talked with individuals.

One day, Agabus came to the home of Philip from Judea. Many years earlier, Agabus had come to Antioch while Paul was in that city. Acts 11:27-28 says, “And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.” Here, we see that this man was a prophet. We see that when Agabus arrived he did a very unusual thing. Acts 21:11 says, “When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his *own* hands and feet, and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind

the man who owns this belt, and deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.””” The Christians at the house of Philip immediately began to plead with Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

Acts 21:13-16 says, “Then Paul answered, ‘What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’ So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, ‘The will of the Lord be done.’ And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.” The attitude that Paul shows here shows the fact that Paul had complete peace about the way that the Lord would work through him whether it was by life or by death.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Paul wrote, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” Paul could have complete peace because he understood the love of Christ for him as an individual. He knew Christ had died for all. He also knew that Christ had died for him personally. 1 Timothy 1:12-14 says, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” Paul understood that the love of Christ was not based on Paul’s past. Instead, that love was based on the grace of our Lord.

Christ had shown that love by dying for Paul while Paul was still living in his sin and rebellion against God. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” As Paul spoke of the fact that he was willing to die for Christ, he was only responding to the love of Christ. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love Him because He first loved us.” The more we grow in our understanding of the love of Christ for us, the more we will have the same attitude that Paul showed. When the other Christians saw the attitude of Paul toward Christ, they responded, “The will of the Lord be done.” We will also want the will of the Lord to be done in our lives and through our lives as we understand the love of Christ for us.

Then, Paul and those who traveled with him packed the things they had with them and went to Jerusalem. In addition, some of the disciples from Caesarea also went with them. This included one man that had been one of the early Christians by the name of Mnason. He was originally from the island of Cyprus. His home was in Jerusalem and Paul and the team that traveled with him were going to stay in the home of Mnason while they were in the city of Jerusalem. We see that Paul provides us with an example of understanding the love of God for our own lives. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the love of Christ by the example that we provide for them. Our children will grow in their understanding of the love of Christ as they see us grow in our understanding of that love. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the love of Christ by your example.