

Sermon No. 416

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH

The book of Acts

CHAPTER 21

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

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ACTS 20: the end of the third missionary journey

Paul's farewell at Miletus – follow my example

- Teach the entire Word of GOD!
 - Seek out and warn against false doctrine!
 - Don't allow trials or people to deter you
 - Run your race with joy
 - Serve with humility
- (Ultimately) Remember the church belongs to Jesus

IF WHAT WE DO IN SERVING CHRIST ISNT ALL ABOUT HIM . . . THEN IT ISNT SERVING THE LORD

- They were well-taught . . . zealous . . . passionate . . . seeking out falsehood
- But somewhere along the way . . . they left their first love

Revelation 2:4 ⁴ "But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first!

- Had their zeal got in the way?
- We consider how we might lose our first love . . .
 - Worldliness
 - Greed
- But a condemning, critical uncompassionate Christianity is just as damaging
- WASN'T ON PAUL'S CONSCIENCE . . . he had been faithful

It is the individual who is responsible for maintaining their first love

Don't leave your love for Jesus behind!

A.From Asia Minor to Jerusalem

(1-4) Sea voyage from Miletus (Turkey) to Tyre (Lebanon)

- Reads like a first century travel guide – no time for sightseeing

¹ 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.

² And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia (Lebanon), we went aboard and set sail. ³ 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. ⁴ And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem

- Was Paul disobedient by going? Some commentators say yes!

(5-6) Departure from Tyre (Lebanon)

⁵ 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. ⁶ When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home

- Despite PROTEST . . . Paul does not turn away from going to Jerusalem
- In his HEART . . . he knows this is the will of GOD

(7) Arrival in Ptolemais (southern Lebanon)

⁷ And when we had finished *our* voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day

- How wonderful to find Christians in every city . . . Christianity was expanding

(8-9) From Ptolemais to Caesarea (

⁸ 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.

- Philip . . . one of the seven chosen to deal with temporal affairs
- Baptised the Ethiopian Eunuch
- Imagine being known by the Good News you present about Jesus

⁹ Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied

- Note (1) They are women (2) Paul isn't condemning them

- Relevant to whole context – they don't try to stop Paul

(10-14) Agabus warns Paul

¹⁰ And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

¹¹ 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 Holy Spirit speaks again . . . but Agabus doesn't tell Paul not to go!

¹² Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ 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." ¹⁴ So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

- We will examine this further

B. Paul comes to Jerusalem

(15-16) Leaving Caesarea we walk to Jerusalem

¹⁵ And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ 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.

(17-22) Paul reports the good work of God among the Gentiles but learns of his bad reputation among the Christians in Jerusalem

¹⁷ And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. ¹⁸ On the following *day* Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; ²¹ but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs. ²² What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.

NLT "You know, dear brother, how many thousands of Jews have also believed, and they all follow the law of Moses very seriously. ²¹ But the Jewish believers here in

Jerusalem have been told that you are teaching all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn their backs on the laws of Moses. They've heard that you teach them not to circumcise their children or follow other Jewish customs. ²² What should we do? They will certainly hear that you have come.

- We hear what God is doing among Gentiles . . . but Paul, the believers here say that you condemn their customs!
- Paul never did tell them to stop . . . he kept the old customs himself . . . Acts 18:18-21 (Nazirite vow) . . . circumcised certain ones

Paul's message . . . customs don't make you more right with GOD!

(23-25) The leaders of the Jerusalem Church make a recommendation

²³ Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. ²⁴ Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave *their* heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. ²⁵ But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."

- Not in NU texts – makes a difference . . . are they being too judgemental?
- Paul, we want you to appease the people . . . be a people pleaser!
- Difference between Peter and Paul

Doesn't sound like something Paul will agree to

(26) Paul agrees to go with the men!

²⁶ Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

- Many commentators believe this was a terrible compromise
- Paul knows that only Jesus' blood can atone for sin
- We need to examine what is happening here . . . see further

(27-30) Jews from Asia stir a mob against Paul

²⁷ Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, ²⁸ crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all *men* everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." ²⁹ (For they had previously^[a] seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) ³⁰ And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.

- Paul was obviously misunderstood
- He has simply taught them that the Law would not save them . . . only believing that Jesus is the promised Messiah who died to pay the penalty for sin will saves them!

(31-36) Roman soldiers rescue Paul

³¹ Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

- The commanders name is Claudius Lysias . . . Acts 23:26

³² He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³ Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done.

- Two chains . . . remember the prophecy of Agabus

³⁴ And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. ³⁵ When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob.

NLT ³⁵ As Paul reached the stairs, the mob grew so violent the soldiers had to lift him to their shoulders to protect him

- The Romans didn't sympathize with Paul . . . they were interested in keeping peace

³⁶ For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"

(37-39) Paul speaks to the Roman commander

³⁷ Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek?" ³⁸ Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?"

- Aren't you a terrorist . . . Romans have little knowledge of the politics . . . No!

³⁹ But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."

- Even after being near beaten to death . . . he wants to preach!

(40) Paul is permitted to address the mob that wanted to kill him

- No one knows why the commander allowed him . . . but what an opportunity for Paul . . . he had waited a lifetime for this

⁴⁰ So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to *them* in the Hebrew language, saying,

In getting to the Heart of the Matter

We need to evaluate

1. Why Paul isn't listening to the Holy Spirit
2. Why Paul isn't condemning Peter for trying to please the people

That will ultimately bring us to . . . the whole reason why HE HAS COME HERE!

1. Concerning the Holy Spirit

Commentators say – Paul was disobedient – this was the Holy Spirit speaking

- (a) Paul would NEVER disobey GOD
- (b) The believers operated in the Spirit . . . applying what they believed GOD said
- (c) The Holy Spirit warnings were intended to PREPARE Paul – not STOP him!

What the LORD lays on our hearts may differ

The Holy Spirit is within each of us . . . very often we have different views

We NEED to learn to respect what GOD is TELLING the OTHER PERSON

2. Concerning pleasing the people at Jerusalem

Commentators says – Paul compromised his faith – confused many

- (a) Paul would NEVER compromise his faith
- (b) Paul is only thinking of CHRIST
- (c) Paul's motive behind allowing the young men to complete their vows

1 Corinthians 9:20 ^{NLT 20} *When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law*

MORE IMPORTANTLY

Paul had long since come to a point in life where he was ready for his promotion!

ACTS 21:13 *I know exactly what I'm doing. I'm fully prepared to be bound, and more—to die for the name of Jesus, the King*

For Paul . . . WALKING WITH CHRIST is taking re becoming more real by the day!

Like Jesus, Paul . . .

- Travelled to Jerusalem with a group of disciples
- Received opposition from hostile Jews who plotted against his life
- Was handed over to the Gentiles
- Had followers who tried to discourage him from going to Jerusalem
- Was ready to lay down his life
- Was ready to surrender all to the will of God
- Was unjustly arrested on the basis of a false accusation
- Was alone was arrested . . . none of his companions were arrested
- Heard the mob crying out, *Away with him!*
- The Roman officer handling Paul's case did not know his true identity
- Was associated with terrorists by a Roman official.

As a result of this, Paul would spend the next five years in jail

In a way few of us will ever know, Paul lived out . . . Philipians 3:10

NKJV 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

THE VOICE 10 I want to know Him *inside and out*. I want to experience the power of His resurrection and join in His suffering, shaped by His death,

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

OH, that was Paul! That isn't me! This is 2016!

Every believer . . . is called to follow after Jesus

But will we experience what Paul experienced?

We shouldn't be surprised when events in our lives are like events in Jesus' life

- There are times of TEMPTATION . . . as there was with Jesus
- There are times when we feel ALONE . . . as there was with Jesus
- There are times when we feel MISUNDERSTOOD . . . as there was with Jesus
- As with Jesus . . . we have needs only GOD can meet
- As with Jesus . . . we seem at the MERCY of the storm
- As with Jesus . . . there are times we must CRY out to GOD
- As with Jesus . . . there are times to LAY DOWN our will
- As with Jesus . . . we must trust that GOD will gloriously raise us up

ALL OF THAT OUGHT TO CAUSE US TO REFLECT CHRIST

- In our conduct
- In our speech
- In our love for others
- In our desire to help

You may only be able to take away two simple truths this morning

1. Remember, that like Paul . . . we are **predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son** . . . Romans 8:29

2. Like Paul, we are to be steadfast

1 Corinthians 15:58

⁵⁸ My dear brothers and sisters, stay firmly planted—be unshakable—do many good works in the name of God, and know that all your labor is not for nothing when it is for GOD

The greatest experience we have in this life, is the free salvation in Christ

It made us totally a new Creature in Christ

It changed our destiny, disposition, dreams and desires