

# Acts 21 Commentary

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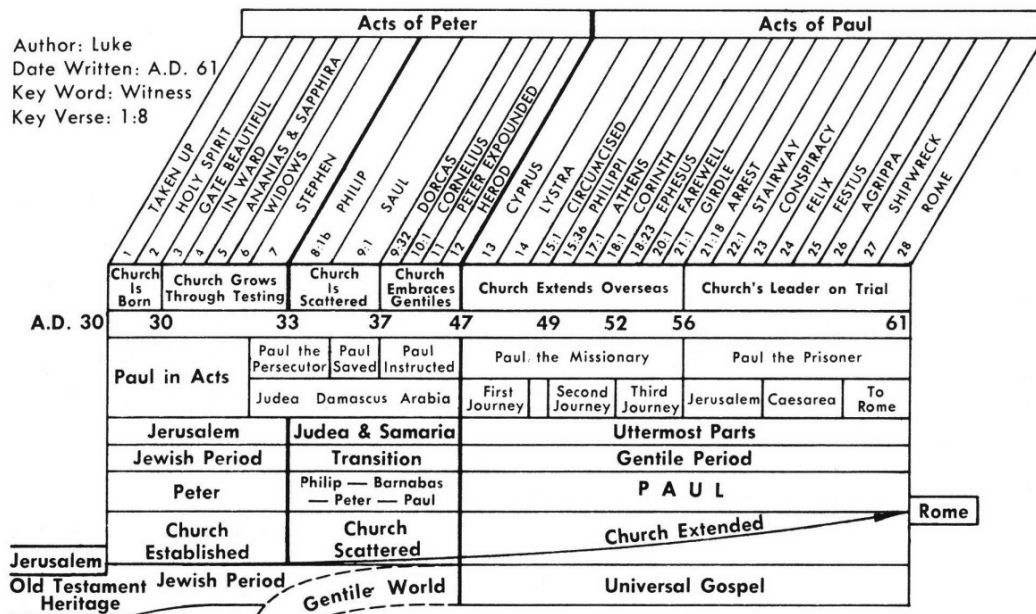
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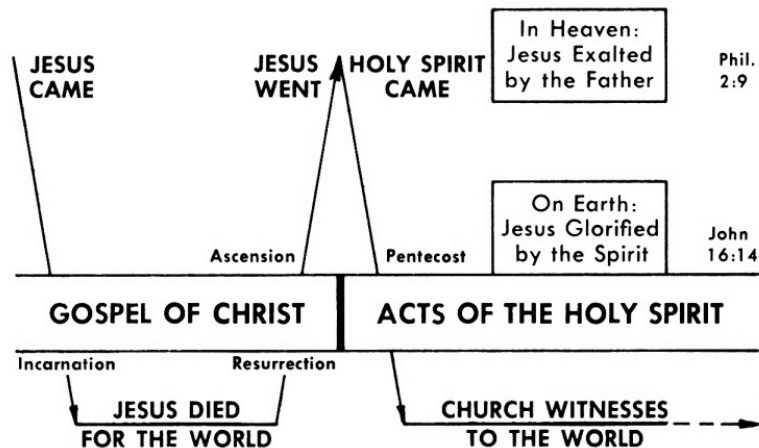
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Author: Luke  
 Date Written: A.D. 61  
 Key Word: Witness  
 Key Verse: 1:8



Click chart to enlarge  
 Chart from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

## THE EXPANDING WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH



Click chart to enlarge

Considering the fact that Acts 13 is such a strategic chapter in regard to world evangelism, take a moment and study Irving Jensen's chart at top of the page (click it to enlarge it which is what I have to do at age 72!). Notice the **bold vertical line** (|) at the end of Acts 12 and beginning of Acts 13 which Jensen estimates to be about year 47 (it could be a short time prior). Note the horizontal description of "Church" - **Church Established** in the first 13 years from Acts 1 through Acts 7, then the **Church Scattered** between Acts 8 through Acts 12, which occurred over a period of about 14 years (and remember all dates and times are at best approximations because Luke gives only a few events that allow us to give specific dates, such as the death of Herod in A D 44 in Acts 12:23) and lastly, beginning in Acts 13 (and until the end of this age), the **Church Extended**, this extension being the primarily the fruit of Paul's Three Missionary Journeys which "upset the world!" (Acts 17:6) Now, you have a good grasp of the chronological context of Acts 13. And as they say in the restaurant when your delicious meal is served "Enjoy!" The three missionary journeys are summarized below (this note will be repeated in subsequent chapters). Click links for the maps of each journey.

<a href="#">Paul's First Missionary Journey</a>	Acts 13:4-14:28
<a href="#">Paul's Second Missionary Journey</a>	Acts 15:36-18:22
<a href="#">Paul's Third Missionary Journey</a>	Acts 18:23-21:26

- Maps in table above are from the **Holman Bible Atlas** ([Hardcover/Paperback version](#)) copyrighted © 1998 B&H Publishing Group, used by permission, all rights reserved. This is one of the best resources for Bible maps as the maps also include helpful short descriptions of the events portrayed on the maps. Please do not download for use on another website. Thank you.
- [Here is a map](#) with all three journeys on one map.

## THE ITINERARY OF PAUL'S THREE MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

FIRST	SECOND	THIRD
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 13:1-3</li> <li>2. <a href="#">Seleucia</a> Acts 13:4</li> <li>3. <a href="#">Salamis on Cyprus</a> Acts 13:5</li> <li>4. <a href="#">Paphos on Cyprus</a> Acts 13:6-12</li> <li>5. <a href="#">Perga in Pamphylia</a> Acts 13:13</li> <li>6. <a href="#">Pisidian Antioch</a> Acts 13:14-50</li> <li>7. <a href="#">Iconium</a> Acts 13:51</li> <li>8. <a href="#">Lystra</a> Acts 14:6-20</li> <li>9. <a href="#">Derbe</a> Acts 14:20</li> <li>10. <a href="#">Lystra</a> Acts 14:21</li> <li>11. <a href="#">Iconium</a> Acts 14:21</li> <li>12. <a href="#">Pisidian Antioch</a> Acts 14:21</li> <li>13. <a href="#">Pamphylia</a> Acts 14:24</li> <li>14. <a href="#">Perga</a> Acts 14:25</li> <li>15. <a href="#">Attalia</a> Acts 14:25</li> <li>16. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 14:26</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 15:36-40</li> <li>2. <a href="#">Syria</a> Acts 15:41</li> <li>3. <a href="#">Cilicia</a> Acts 15:41</li> <li>4. <a href="#">Derbe</a> Acts 16:1</li> <li>5. <a href="#">Lystra</a> Acts 16:1-5</li> <li>6. <a href="#">Phrygia/Galatia</a> Acts 16:6</li> <li>7. <a href="#">Mysia</a> Acts 16:7</li> <li>8. <a href="#">Troas</a> Acts 16:8-10</li> <li>9. <a href="#">Samothece</a> Acts 16:11</li> <li>10. <a href="#">Neapolis</a> Acts 16:11</li> <li>11. <a href="#">Philippi</a> Acts 16:12</li> <li>12. <a href="#">Amphipolis</a> Acts 17:1</li> <li>13. <a href="#">Apollonia</a> Acts 17:1</li> <li>14. <a href="#">Thessalonica</a> Acts 17:1- 9</li> <li>15. <a href="#">Berea</a> Acts 17:10-14</li> <li>16. <a href="#">Athens</a> Acts 17:15-34</li> <li>17. <a href="#">Corinth</a> Acts 18:1-17</li> <li>18. <a href="#">Cenchreae</a> Acts 18:18</li> <li>19. <a href="#">Ephesus</a> Acts 18:19</li> <li>20. <a href="#">Caesarea</a> Acts 18:22</li> <li>21. <a href="#">Jerusalem</a> Acts 18:22</li> <li>22. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 18:22</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 18:23</li> <li>2. <a href="#">Phrygia/Galatia</a> Acts 18:23-28</li> <li>3. <a href="#">Ephesus</a> Acts 19:1-41</li> <li>4. <a href="#">Macedonia</a> Acts 20:1</li> <li>5. <a href="#">Greece</a> Acts 20:2</li> <li>6. <a href="#">Macedonia</a> Acts 20:3-5</li> <li>7. <a href="#">Philippi</a> Acts 20:6</li> <li>8. <a href="#">Troas</a> Acts 20:6-12</li> <li>9. <a href="#">Assos</a> Acts 20:13</li> <li>10. <a href="#">Mitylene</a> Acts 20:14</li> <li>11. <a href="#">Samos</a> Acts 20:15</li> <li>12. <a href="#">Miletus</a> Acts 20:15-38</li> <li>13. <a href="#">Cos</a> Acts 21:1</li> <li>14. <a href="#">Rhodes</a> Acts 21:1</li> <li>15. <a href="#">Patara</a> Acts 21:1</li> <li>16. <a href="#">Tyre</a> Acts 21:3-6</li> <li>17. <a href="#">Ptolemais</a> Acts 21:7</li> <li>18. <a href="#">Caesarea</a> Acts 21:8-14</li> </ol>

**Charles Swindoll** points out that "When we study the journeys of Paul in the book of Acts, we're not just reading the travel log of a man; we're observing the redemptive plan of God unfolding as He promised. Through the ministry of Saul of Tarsus, God's mission to reclaim His creation from the death grip of evil would move to its next stage. The plan of this mission was outlined in the Lord's promise at His ascension, where He said,

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses..."

1. In Jerusalem [Stage 1: Acts 2–7],
2. and in all Judea and Samaria [Stage 2: Acts 8–12],
3. and even to the remotest part of the earth [Stage 3: Acts 13–28]." (Acts 1:[8](#))

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### John Hannah's Outline for Third Missionary Journey (see [map](#))

- D. The third missionary journey of Paul (Acts 18:23-21:16)
  1. The ministry in Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23)
  2. The ministry in Ephesus (Acts 18:24-19:41)
    - a. Instruction of Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)
    - b. Instruction of some of John's followers (Acts 19:1-7)
    - c. Instruction of the Ephesians (Acts 19:8-20)
    - d. Instructions concerning his plans (Acts 19:21-22)
    - e. The riots in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41)
  3. The ministry in Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 20:1-5)
  4. The ministry in Troas (Acts 20:6-12)
  5. The ministry in Miletus (Acts 20:13-38)
    - a. His journey to Miletus (Acts 20:13-16)

- b. His message to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-35)
      - 1. Concerning his ministry (Acts 20:17-27)
      - 2. Concerning the church (Acts 20:28-35)
    - c. His farewell to the Ephesians (Acts 20:36-38)
  - 6. The ministry at Tyre (Acts 21:1-6)
    - a. His journey to Tyre (Acts 21:1-3)
    - b. His ministry in Tyre (Acts 21:4-6)
  - 7. The ministry in Caesarea (Acts 21:7-16)
    - a. Agabus' prediction (Acts 21:7-12)
    - b. Paul's reply (Acts 21:13-14)
    - c. The journey toward Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-16)
- E. The journey of Paul to Rome (Acts 21:17-28:31)
  - 1. His witness in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17-23:35)
    - a. Paul's report to the elders (Acts 21:17-26)
    - b. Paul's arrest (Acts 21:27-36)
    - c. Paul's defense (Acts 21:37-23:10)
      - 1. His first defense (Acts 21:37-22:23)
        - a. The background (Acts 21:37-40)
        - b. The content (Acts 22:1-21)
        - c. The result (Acts 22:22-23)
      - 2. His second defense (Acts 22:24-23:10)
        - a. The background (Acts 22:24-29)
        - b. The council (Acts 22:30)
        - c. The content (Acts 23:1-9)
        - d. The conflict (Acts 23:10)
    - d. Paul's deliverance (Acts 23:11-35)
      - 1. The encouragement (Acts 23:11)
      - 2. The plot (Acts 23:12-16)
      - 3. The counterplot (Acts 23:17-24)
      - 4. The letter to Felix (Acts 23:25-30)
      - 5. The deliverance to Felix (Acts 23:31-35)
  - 2. His witness in Caesarea (Acts 24:1-26:32)
    - a. Paul's defense before Felix (Acts 24:1-27)
      - 1. The setting (Acts 24:1)
      - 2. The accusations of Tertullus (Acts 24:2-9)
      - 3. The reply of Paul (Acts 24:10-21)
      - 4. The consequences (Acts 24:22-27)
    - b. Paul's defense before Festus (Acts 25:1-12)
      - 1. The setting (Acts 25:1-5)
      - 2. The trial (Acts 25:6-11)
      - 3. The result (Acts 25:12)
    - c. Paul's defense before Agrippa (Acts 25:13-26:32)
      - 1. The arrival of Agrippa (Acts 25:13)
      - 2. Festus' presentation of Paul's case (Acts 25:14-22)
      - 3. Festus' presentation of Paul (Acts 25:23-27)
      - 4. Paul's defense before Agrippa (Acts 26:1-23)
      - 5. Paul's answer to Festus (Acts 26:24-26)
      - 6. Paul's interaction with Agrippa (Acts 26:27-29)
      - 7. The conclusion (Acts 26:30-32)
  - 3. His witness on the way to Rome (Acts 27:1-28:15)
    - a. His witness aboard ship (Acts 27:1-44)
    - b. His witness on Malta (Acts 28:1-15)
      - 1. Paul's miraculous preservation (Acts 28:1-6)
      - 2. Paul's healing of Publius' father (Acts 28:7-10)
      - 3. Paul's continued journey toward Rome (Acts 28:11-15)
  - 4. His witness in Rome (Acts 28:16-31)
    - a. The occasion for his witness (Acts 28:16-22)

- b. The content of his witness (Acts 28:23-28)
- c. The result of his witness (Acts 28:29)
- d. The summary of Paul's witness in Rome (Acts 28:30-31)
- [Hannah's Bible Outlines](#) - Recommended Resource

**Acts 21:1 And when it came about that we had parted from them and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara**

KJV Acts 21:1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

- **We had parted from them:** Acts 20:37,38 1Sa 20:41,42 1Th 2:17
- **and had set sail:** Acts 27:2,4 Lu 5:4 8:22
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

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## SAILING FROM COS TO RHODES TO PATARA

**And when it came about that we had parted from them and had set sail** - The idea is after they had at last torn themselves away! Paul's affection for his fellow believers ran deep (Acts 20:37) making this an emotionally painful separation. Paul had sent for the Ephesian elders who traveled some 50 miles south from Ephesus to the port city of [Miletus](#). (Acts 20:17+), this important last face to face meeting being described in detail in Acts 20:17-38+. In threading between these small islands off the eastern coast of modern day Turkey, they were traveling in a smaller vessel commonly referred to as a [coasting vessel](#), which are not large enough for travel on the open sea (explaining why they changed ships at Patara -see Acts 21:2).

**Had parted** (withdrawn) ([645](#))([apospao](#) from **apó** = from + **spáo** = to draw or pull) literally means to draw, pull or drag away from. **Apospao** is used literally to draw out a sword in Mt 26:51. **Apospao** is used figuratively Acts 20:30+ ("to **draw away** the disciples after them") to describe drawing someone away from "attracting" them from the Word of truth. In the present context the figurative sense is to draw away from or depart from the Ephesian elders at Miletus. In Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, Juliet says "**Parting is such sweet sorrow**, That I shall say good night till it be morrow." And for believers this is even more true for "the night is almost gone and the day is at hand" (Ro 13:12) and we shall soon all be reunited before the King of kings. Chrysostom, himself, a Greek, says the Greek word means "had torn away." (cf Jesus in Garden of Gethsemane - Lk 22:42). This sense emphasizes how the parting was indeed somewhat emotionally traumatizing even for the apostle Paul. There was a strong bond of mutual love between Paul and the elders so that this verb pictures him as having to "tear himself away!"

**Had set sail** (put out to sea) ([321](#))([anago](#)) was a nautical technical term and in the passive voice meant to put (out) to sea or set sail. (cf Luke 8:22; Acts 13:13; 16:11; 18:21; 20:3, 13; 21:1, 2; 27:2, 4, 12, 21; 28:10, 11).

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### DISTANCES

- [Miletus](#) to [Cos](#) - ~50 miles
- [Cos](#) to [Rhodes](#) - ~60 miles
- [Rhodes](#) to [Patara](#) - ~65 miles
- [Patara](#) to [Tyre](#) - ~385-400 miles

**We ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara** - Apparently they stayed overnight at Cos (cf **the next day**) and most commentators assume that each segment of this trip took a day so they would have remained in each city overnight (see Ramsay's note below). (see [Cos in Roman Era](#) Cos was the name of the capital city of the island Cos). **Cos** was an island in the Archipelago, or Aegean Sea, one of those called the Sporades and was famous for the worship of Aesculapius and Juno. In **Rhodes** they would have seen the remains of the [Colossus of Rhodes](#), another of the [seven wonders of the ancient](#)

[world](#) (Paul had already seen the Temple of Diana/Artemis another wonder of the seven) (See [depiction of the Seven Wonders](#)). The **Colossus** (see [artist's reconstruction](#)) had crumbled at the knees about 226 BC but the impressive remains were still visible until about 654 AD. [Pliny the Elder](#) remarked that few people could wrap their arms around the fallen thumb of the Colossus and that each of its fingers was larger than most statues. Luke does not say they spent the night there.

**THOUGHT** - It is worth noting that Luke does not even make a passing mention of the remnants of this great human achievement! It is good for God's men to not be impressed by the passing, temporal "glories" of this present evil age, lest they ensnare us and entice us (envy, covetousness, etc, etc). John describes the fate of human achievements in 1 John 2:17+ (see context 1 Jn 2:15, 2:16+) writing "The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." The corollary truth of John's words is that the glories of this passing world can attract even believers (at least for a time) and impede their doing the will of God (Read Paul's "antidote" - Col 3:2+). James 4:4+ speaks to this same danger warning "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." Is there any "Colossus of Rhodes" that is attracting you dear reader. You can rest assured that it will crumble one day and only those who do "the will of God" will live forever! There is only one **Rock** which is also a **Redeemer**! (Ps 19:14+).

**Sir William Ramsay** explained why we can fairly confidently assume the ship remained overnight in each of the cities mentioned - The reason [the ship did not sail at night] lies in the wind, which in the Aegean during the summer generally blows from the north, beginning at a very early hour in the morning; in the late afternoon it dies away; at sunset there is a dead calm, and thereafter a gentle south wind arises and blows during the night. (See page 158 in [St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen](#))

The weather and winds explain why they would likely stop overnight at each port. "In the summer months, the wind of the Aegean Sea blows from the north, beginning very early in the morning. In the late afternoon the wind dies away. Sunset brings a dead calm, and later a gentle south breeze blows. If a ship was heading down the coast, it would typically anchor at evening and wait for the winds of the morning." (Nelson Study Bible)

**Larkin** - Romans would have been familiar with Cos as a health resort with a salubrious climate, hot ferrous and sulfurous springs, medical school, and sanctuary of Asclepius. Emperor Claudius, influenced by his own physician, Xenophon of Cos, had recently made the port a free city and conferred immunity from taxation (A.D. 53). Its own Cassius had plundered Rhodes (43 B.C.), which was now "little more than a beautiful city with a glorious past" (Couch 1988:183). ([Acts 21:1-16 To Jerusalem--By Sea to Palestine](#))

**Robertson on Cos** - island famous as the birthplace of Hippocrates and Apelles with a great medical school. Great trading place with many Jews. (Ed: The fact that they apparently stayed overnight would have given Paul an opportunity to speak the Gospel to the Jews -- there is no mention however of a synagogue or of Paul entering into a synagogue as was his usual practice - anything further would be speculation. We need to remember to ask Paul about Cos when we speak with him in Heaven! [See article in Jewish Encyclopedia on Cos/Kos](#)) **Utey** adds "The name means "summit." It is the name of both an island and its largest city. This island was the home of Hippocrates (fifth century B.C.). It was the site of a large medical school. It was a free state considered to be part of the Roman province of Asia."

**Robertson on Rhodes** - Called the island of roses. The sun shone most days and made roses luxuriant. The great colossus which represented the sun, one of the seven wonders of the world, was prostrate at this time. The island was at the entrance to the Aegean Sea and had a great university, especially for rhetoric and oratory. There was great commerce also. (See also [article in Jewish Encyclopedia](#))

**Robertson on Patara** - A seaport on the Lycian coast (Ed: Not an island but on the mainland) on the left bank of the [Xanthus](#). It once had an oracle of Apollo which rivalled that at [Delphi](#). This was the course taken by hundreds of ships every season.

**Utey** adds it was "was the chief port for ships to Syria. Patara was a coastal city in Lycia."

**Swindoll on Patara** - This seaport in the Roman province of Lycia (on the southern coast of the Turkish mainland) was one of the largest and most prosperous in the region. (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**We ran a straight course** (2113) ([euthudromeo](#) from **euthus** = straight + **dromos** = road) means to run straight course to one's destination or goal and here in Acts 21:1 and the only other use in Acts 16:11+ (voyage from Troas > Samothrace > Neapolis) it means to sail a straight course. See [map](#) for Cos to [Rhodes](#).

Recall that one reason they decided to take the straight course (shown in the map above - see blue line from Patara in Lycia to Tyre) is that it would be shorter and therefore faster, which would have been significant to Paul because Luke had recorded in the previous chapter that "he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost." (Acts 20:16+) Travel on the open sea was higher risk but Paul was willing to take that risk.



**MacArthur** on the size of the ship from **Patara** to **Tyre** - The ship that would bear Paul across the Mediterranean on his eventful voyage to Rome carried 276 people (Acts 27:37), and this one may have been similar in size. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Uteley** has an interesting observation - Luke was very familiar with sailing terms (like *euthudromeo* cf. Acts 21:3). Most of the “we” sections of Acts involve sailing.

#### Acts 21:2 and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail.

KJV Acts 21:2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.  
finding Acts 27:6; Jonah 1:3

- **crossing over to Phoenicia** Acts 15:3
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**And having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia** (see [map](#)) **we went aboard and set sail** - **Found** ([heurisko](#)) indicates they found one after searching. This would have been a larger vessel to run a straight course from Patara to **Phoenicia** (of which **Tyre** is the capital). The small ships would generally hug the coastline. Recall that Paul had originally intended to visit Syria, specifically his adopted hometown of Antioch (Acts 20:3+), but time was running short.

**Larkin** - Paul and his party change ships at this point because (1) their sailors know only the Aegean, (2) the ship is a small coastal vessel unsuited for the four-hundred-mile trans-Mediterranean route to Phoenicia or (3) it is committed to taking the slower coastal route east ([Acts 21:1-16 To Jerusalem--By Sea to Palestine](#))

**Nelson Study Bible** has an interesting note - Paul wasted no time because he wanted to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost, which occurs just 50 days after Passover. Paul had celebrated Passover with his friends in Philippi more than three weeks earlier, so he had less than 30 days to reach Jerusalem in time for the festival.

**Crossing over** ([1276](#)) (**diaperao** from **dia** = through + **perao** = to pass) meant to cross over entirely. **BDAG** - movement across the area between two sides of a geographical object. **Gilbrant** - The basic meaning of this term is “cross.” Often the point of departure, the destination, or both are included. Related to **peran**, “across, on the other side,” and **peras**, “boundary,” it is the source of the English words portal or port. Most New Testament references are to Jesus and His disciples’ activity of crossing the Sea of Galilee’

**Diaperao** - 6v - cross over(1), crossed over(4), crossing over(1).

Matt. 9:1; Matt. 14:34; Mk. 5:21; Mk. 6:53; Lk. 16:26; Acts 21:2. Twice in the Septuagint - Dt 30:13, Isa 23:2.

#### Acts 21:3 When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo.

KJV Acts 21:3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

- **When we came in sight of Cyprus** Acts 21:16; 4:36; 11:19; 13:4; 15:39; 27:4
- **we kept sailing to Syria** Acts 15:23,41; 18:18; Judges 10:6; 2 Sa 8:6; Isaiah 7:2; Mt 4:24; Luke 2:2
- **and landed at Tyre** Acts 12:20; Ps 45:12; 87:4; Isaiah 23:17,18; Mt 11:21; Luke 10:13
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

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**When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left** (see [map](#) or click the one above) - Leave it literally “on the port side.” Apparently they did not stop at Cyprus but ran a straight course. The southern shore of Cyprus, was shallow and had no harbors, so the ship did not try to put in there. In any event, this surely would have aroused memories of Paul’s first missionary journey about fourteen years before (Acts 13:4-13+).

**Cyprus** is the Kittim and Chittim in the Old Testament (Nu 24:24; Isa 23:1,12; Jer 2:10; Ezek 27:6; Da 11:30).

**Came in sight** (398)([anaphaino](#) from **ana** = again + **phaino** = appear) means to be made manifest, cause to appear, bring to the light. Used only here in the active voice as a **nautical technical term** (Luke uses many nautical terms) meaning to come in sight of land. The only other use is Lk 19:11+ "they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to **appear** immediately."

**Vincent on came in sight** - A nautical phrase. The verb literally means to bring to light: and its use here is analogous to the English marine phrase, to raise the land.

KJV says they "**discovered Cyprus**" about which **J Vernon McGee** says "I love the way this is expressed here. I think the translators of our Authorized Version have captured something that the modern translations just miss. They "**discovered Cyprus**" on the left hand is a way of saying that as they were sailing towards Tyre, Cyprus loomed up in the distance on their left-hand side. Of course it doesn't mean that they were the first people to discover Cyprus. They saw the island and were near enough to recognize it, but they did not stop there. They were on their way to Tyre, a great commercial center which had been there since ancient times." (Thru the Bible)

**Leaving** (2641)([kataleipo](#) from **kata** = intensifies or strengthens the meaning + **leipo** = to leave ) literally means to leave behind.

**We kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre** (see [map](#)) - Luke mentions **Syria** the Roman province that included not only Antioch to the north but also Phoenicia and Judea to the south. This trip would have taken 4-6 days depending on the winds (and estimating 5 knots/hour - see [speed of ancient ships](#)). Don't you wonder how many of the crew on that vessel we will meet in Heaven? "Tyre was formerly one of the most commercial cities of the world; and it is probable that in the time of Paul its commercial importance had not entirely ceased." (Barnes) Luke mentions no synagogue, which one would have expected had there been one for that is where Paul always made a "bee line!"

**Mare** on background of **Tyre** - This port, famous in Old Testament times (with its history going back to the fourteenth century bc, and its power seen in establishing the north African city of Carthage, ca. 800 bc) was later conquered by Alexander the Great. It was about 400 miles southeast of Patara (a sea journey of about five days) and about forty-five miles south-southwest of Beirut and was considered to be one of the most important Phoenician cities. In the New Testament period, a group of disciples had earlier been formed at Tyre when persecuted disciples had taken the word to Phoenicia (Acts 11:19). Archaeological remains, chiefly Roman and Early Byzantine, include the Alexander causeway, a colonnaded street, a theater, a triumphal arch, a Roman forum, a hippodrome, and a Byzantine basilica. It became strongly Christian, with a bishop's seat, in the second century. Origen died there in the third century. (New Testament Background Commentary: A New Dictionary of Words, Phrases and Situations in Bible Order)

**Larkin on Tyre** - They put in at **Tyre**, a city built on an island with its port on the south side. An earthen mole constructed by Alexander the Great connected the city to the mainland, and subsequent action of the harbor waters had left a sandy beach. (Ibid)

**For there the ship was to unload its cargo** - It must have been a large cargo as it took seven days to unload (and presumably reload). The **cargo** included the precious passenger Paul the premier proclaimer of the Gospel.

**Was to unload** (670)([apophortizomai](#) from **apo** = from + [phortizo](#) = to load) means to discharge a cargo and is used only here in the NT. Bauer states that this is a **nautical term**, used for jettisoning the cargo during a storm but also of regular unloading.

**Cargo** (1117)([gomos](#) from **gemo** = to be full, to be laden) referred to a relatively heavy object that was carried and thus a load, burden or as here cargo of a ship. Two other uses in Rev 18:11, 12 referring to the cargoes that would soon be useless because of the final pouring out of wrath on the enemies of God. Two uses in the Septuagint - Ex 23:5, 2 Ki 5:17.

**Acts 21:4 After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.**

KJV Acts 21:4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

- **After looking up the disciples** Acts 19:1; Mt 10:11; 2 Ti 1:17
- **we stayed there seven days** Acts 20:6,7; 28:14; Rev 1:10
- **they kept telling Paul through the Spirit** Acts 21:10-12; 20:22
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**SEVEN DAYS WITH  
THE SAINTS**



**After looking up the disciples** - First mention of Christians at Tyre. Recall that this area had likely been evangelized earlier Luke recording "So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to **Phoenicia** and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone." (Acts 11:19-). The irony of course is that the persecution in Jerusalem which presumably led to founding of a church in Tyre was a persecution that was led by Paul (then Saul) himself! (cf Acts 9:1-2+, Acts 26:9-11+). And now he is seeking out this church not to persecute but to fellowship with! It is also worth noting that the people of Tyre had been more positively disposed to Jesus' ministry than Judea had been (Read Lk 6:17+; Lk 10:13-14+).

**THOUGHT** - Paul was not into sight-seeing but in saint strengthening. There is nothing wrong with a little sight seeing, just as long as you don't lose sight of God's ultimate purpose for life which is to glorify Him and that is not usually accomplished by sight seeing.

**Robertson** adds that "Paul went also through Phoenicia on the way to the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:3+). As at Troas and Miletus, so here Paul's [indefatigable](#) energy shows itself with characteristic zeal." (**ED**: Don't we all wish we were like Paul and incapable of being fatigued! Do I hear an "Amen" or an "O my" from you dear reader?)

**Looking up** (429)([aneurisko](#) from [ana](#) = intensifies + [heurisko](#) = to find) implies that they found after diligent searching. In other words there were no disciples waiting on the dock to welcome them on their arrival. The only other use is Lk 2:16+ describing the shepherds (Lk 2:8-15) who "came in a hurry and **found** their way to Mary and Joseph and the baby as He lay in the manger." In short, the translation "Looking up" leaves something to be desired, because [aneurisko](#) stresses an intense search. In other words, they could not just look around the city to spot a building with a steeple nor check the yellow pages. And they did not even have a GPS to guide them. They simply had to make a diligent search for any disciples that might be residents of Tyre. And remember that in Paul's time, you could not check into a Motel 6 in Tyre but had to depend on the hospitality of the residents. As we discover, God had already made "reservations" at "Christian comfort inn." Let me ask you a question -- have you searched the block to see if there are any other disciples of Jesus? Just a thought to ponder.

**Disciples** (3101)([mathetes](#) from [manthano](#) = to learn which Vine says is "from a root *math*, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor". Gives us our English = "*mathematics*") describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. This was the primary term used in Acts to identify genuine believers in Jesus Christ - as His disciples. Sadly, some have taught an artificial distinction exists between believers and disciples, the latter being "believers on spiritual steroids" so to speak. Nothing could be further from the truth. All believers are to be followers and learners of Jesus from the day of their regeneration to the day of their falling asleep in Jesus. The sad fruit of teaching a distinction has result in a church in America that has failed to count the cost of following Jesus, with many who profess Christ but do not live like genuine followers of Christ. And remember what Jesus commanded "Go and **make disciples** ([matheteuo](#) in [aorist imperative](#) = "Just do it!" - Mt 28:19+)"! That alone should put to rest any suggestion that disciples are a "different (more elite) category" of believers. In short all genuine believers are disciples of Jesus.

#### **Mathetes in Acts -**

Acts 6:1; Acts 6:2; Acts 6:7; Acts 9:1; Acts 9:10; Acts 9:19; Acts 9:25; Acts 9:26; Acts 9:38; Acts 11:26; Acts 11:29; Acts 13:52; Acts 14:20; Acts 14:22; Acts 14:28; Acts 15:10; Acts 16:1; Acts 18:23; Acts 18:27; Acts 19:1; Acts 19:9; Acts 19:30; Acts 20:1; Acts 20:30; Acts 21:4; Acts 21:16

#### **Related Resource:**

- [What is the difference between a Christian and a disciple?](#)
- [David Platt Warns Unconverted Believers: 'Slay Yourself'](#)

**We stayed there seven days** - The ship must have had a large cargo to unload to give Paul seven days with the disciples. God is always in charge of details like this! A "mini" Pauline seminar undoubtedly took place.

**Larkin** - The fellowship Paul enjoys at many stops on his journey illustrates Barclay's maxim "The man who is in the family of the Church has friends all over the world." For Paul "the church has become a countercultural, global network of communities caring for their own subversive missionaries who are now traveling to and fro throughout the Empire" (Willimon 1988:159). (Ibid)

**Jack Andrews** comments "They **stayed for seven days**—one week may not be long to some people—but friendships can be made in **seven days**; bonds can be forged in **seven days**; saints can be encouraged and equipped in **seven days**; ministry can be done in **seven days**; fellowship can thrive in **seven days**. The Lord created the heavens and the earth in one week. Paul built some close ties in **seven days** and the Lord blessed His servants and His saints in **seven days**! (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts)

**Keener** - Jewish people and Christians could expect hospitality from their own wherever they went; it was a required part of their culture, honored their host and was an incomparably superior alternative to spending the night in inns, which usually doubled as brothels. (The IVP Bible Background Commentary)

**Jack Arnold** has some interesting thoughts on the saints warning Paul - These disciples warned Paul, but he was not to be diverted from his intention to go to Jerusalem because God had spoken to him that he was to go. "And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me" (Acts 20:22, 23+). Paul was obedient to the **revealed will of God** for him (See [Arnold's discussion of will of God](#)). In every city where Paul stopped on the way to Jerusalem, there were prophets who foretold of Paul's dangers in Jerusalem. God gave these predictions to Paul over and over that Paul might clearly think through the issues of true discipleship and persevere unto the end, calling upon God for strength to endure whatever was before him.... The claim that Paul was out of the will of God is faulty because: 1) Paul was carrying a love offering from the Gentile Christians to the needy saints in Jerusalem, and he had promised to deliver it himself. (2) Later in Paul's writing to the Philippians from a Roman prison he expresses that all the things that had happened to him had not hindered the gospel but furthered it. "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12+). (3) According to the Bible, Paul was to preach before kings and rulers, and he had not done so up to this point. "But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake'" (Acts 9:15, 16+). Imprisonment was God's way of getting Paul before the Roman authorities. The Holy Spirit had prepared Paul for what he was to face in Jerusalem and he was following the conviction of the Holy Spirit to his own conscience. ([Acts 21:1-14 The Will of God](#))

**And they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem - Kept telling** is in the vivid [imperfect tense](#) indicating that one after another, again and again they were warning Paul not to venture to the Holy City implying there would be unholy danger awaiting him! As he had written to the Romans (written earlier from Corinth as he was completing the collection for the poor in Palestine and before he went to Jerusalem to deliver the money) clearly Paul had already suspected friction in Jerusalem...

Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints (Ro 15:30-31+)

And so their warning would not come as a surprise to Paul, for in Acts 20 he had stated "that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me." (Acts 20:23+)

**William Barclay** - During one of the sieges in the Spanish Civil War, some in the garrison wished to surrender but one of their comrades said, "I would rather die on my feet than live on my knees." Paul was like that.

Nelson Study Bible - Paul had already demonstrated sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6). He had already said that he was "bound in the spirit" to go to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22). Later Jesus Himself encouraged Paul concerning his decision to go (Acts 23:11).

**John MacArthur** explains in detail why he does not feel Paul was being disobedient to the Spirit - That Paul was not disobedient on this occasion, however, is evident from several considerations. **First**, the phrase **through the Spirit** is inconclusive; it merely means that someone spoke as from a spiritual gift of prophecy. As Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 14:29, however, not every manifestation of the gift of prophecy is legitimate. Whether it was legitimate in this instance must be determined by other factors. **Second**, Paul lived a life sensitive to the Spirit's leading. When forbidden by the Spirit to preach in certain regions, Paul did not disobey (Acts 16:6-7+). When led by the Spirit to minister in Macedonia, Paul immediately obeyed (Acts 16:9-10+). That long-term pattern of obedience makes it unlikely that he was disobedient in this matter. **Third**, the Holy Spirit had never before prohibited Paul from going to Jerusalem. According to Acts 20:22-23+, He warned Paul repeatedly of what would happen to him when he got there but did not tell him not to go. **Fourth**, Paul described his mission to Jerusalem as "the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:24+). How could the Holy Spirit forbid Paul from doing what the Lord Jesus Christ had commanded him to? Further, Acts 19:21+ records that **"Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem,"** while in Acts 20:22+ the apostle describes himself as **"bound in spirit... on my way to Jerusalem."** He was compelled in his innermost being by the Holy Spirit to undertake this mission. **Finally**, the Scriptures nowhere suggest that Paul sinned by going to Jerusalem. After he got there he declared, **"I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day"** (Acts 23:1+; cf. Acts 24:16+). It is difficult to see how he could have said that if he had just flagrantly sinned against God. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Larkin** adds "Since the same Spirit has compelled Paul to go to Jerusalem (Acts 19:21; Acts 20:22), we would be confronted with a contradiction if the prediction were actually a prohibition, but such need not be the case (see note). Paul, then, is not disobedient to the Spirit by disregarding the prohibition. As with all the Spirit's predictive warnings, it is intended simply to stiffen his determination as he once again realistically counts the cost (Acts 20:22-24). Sometimes the counsel of friends, filtered through the grid of their

fears and concerns for our safety, can be misguidance. Like Paul, we must determine to "do the right thing" even when outward circumstances and projected outcome do not appear to be stamped with the blessing of God." (Ibid)

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**J Vernon McGee** - This is the verse used by those Bible teachers who feel that Paul made a great mistake when he went up to Jerusalem. It shows that these men spoke to Paul through the Holy Spirit. If I understand this correctly, the Spirit of God is not going to contradict Himself. I believe He is saying the same thing here that He had said before. Paul is not to go up to Jerusalem unless he is prepared to make the required sacrifice. Paul keeps saying that he is willing to make the sacrifice. He is perfectly willing to lay down his life for the Lord Jesus. That is the way I think it should be understood. For several reasons I do not believe that Paul stepped out of the will of God when he went up to Jerusalem. He had a sentimental reason for going there, but it was a good reason. He was carrying the offering from the gentile Christians to the suffering saints in Jerusalem. He wanted to present this to the church in Jerusalem with his own hands, because it was his hands that at one time had wasted the church in Jerusalem. He had been partly responsible for the state of penury in which the saints in Jerusalem found themselves. Paul did not want to send some representative to Jerusalem; he wanted to go to Jerusalem himself. Another reason I do not believe that Paul stepped out of the will of God is because of his writings later on. When Paul was in prison in Rome, the church at Philippi sent to him an expression of their sympathy. They loved him and they sympathized with his condition. But Paul wrote to them, "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12). Because what happened to Paul did not hinder the spread of the gospel, I do not believe that Paul was out of the will of God. Furthermore, you remember that when the Lord appeared to Ananias and told him to go to Paul after his conversion, He said to Ananias, "... Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16). Up to this point in our study of Acts, Paul has not appeared before kings and rulers, but we know it is in the will of God that he should do so. In the next chapters we will find that he does go before kings. He will testify before King Agrippa. It is probable that he appeared before Nero in Rome. We know for certain that he reached those who were in Caesar's household because he sent greetings from them in his Epistle to the Philippians (4:22), which was written while he was a prisoner in Rome. Finally, as I have already mentioned, in 2 Timothy 4:7 Paul writes, "... I have finished my course..." This was written at the end of his life. It seems to me that he would not say that if for a time he had stepped out of the will of God. I must confess that as I look back over my own ministry, I am confident that I stepped out of the will of God for a brief time. I didn't do it purposely. I did it ignorantly. I did it in a headstrong manner. I think the Lord has a way of making these things up to us. But I do not think that Paul at the end of his life could write that he had finished his course if he had been out of the will of God. I have spent some time on this because there is controversy over it. I have several very good friends in the ministry who do not agree with my point of view, but we are still friends. I love these brethren in the Lord. I just tease them and say I hope they will see the light someday. As one of them said to me, "When we get in the presence of the Lord, we will all be in agreement." (Thru the Bible)

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**Jack Arnold** has a very helpful summary of **the will of God** in the context of this passage regarding God's will for Paul regarding going to Jerusalem...\

### **The Will of God Acts 21:1-14**

After a person becomes a Christian, the next most important step is to ascertain the will of God for his life. The most vital question for a Christian is, "What is the will of God for my life?" The Christian is not only asked to know the will of God, but he is commanded to know the will of God for his life. "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17).

According to the Bible, there are at least four different forms of the will of God. Bible scholars have tried to give more than four categories, but these four essentially express all we need to know as Christians about the will of God.

### **The Secret Will of God**

The secret will of God flows out of God's sovereignty and includes what He planned in eternity past, and this will (plan) most certainly will come to pass. The secret will is known only to God and not to man.

"Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'" (Isa. 46:9, 10).

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).

It is important to know that God has a secret will for it gives the Christian confidence that God has a plan for

this work and for each Christian individually.

## **The Revealed Will of God**

The revealed will of God refers to the commands of Scripture. It deals with what God desires for the Christian to do and with what the Christian ought to do according to God's revelation in the Bible (Deut. 29:29). The revealed will is never done perfectly by the Christian but it is his ethical standard of conduct. Christians, for instance, are commanded to be holy in conduct (I Pet. 1:15, 16), to have a prayer life (I Thes. 5:17), to grow in grace and knowledge (II Pet. 3:18), to love one another (Jn. 13:34, 35), to witness for Christ in this world (Matt. 28:19) and to keep hundreds of other commands written in Scripture. If a Christian fails to keep the revealed will of God, then he must pay the consequences for his disobedience.

## **The Permissive Will of God**

The permissive will of God is a theological way of explaining how nothing can happen outside of God's secret will, and yet God is not responsible for sin. Human sin falls under the permissive will of God. It is related to those responsible actions of men which God passively allows, and yet He still has control over them. The permissive will of God deals with the negative aspects of God's secret will.

## **The Directive Will of God**

The directive will of God deals with those things God is actively and deliberately directing in His secret will. It is related to the positive aspects of the secret will of God. God's directive will deals with the guidance of the Christian so that he knows in his experience, at least in part, the outworking of the secret will of God.

## **What Is Involved in the Directive Will?**

The directive will is getting divine leading and guidance in the Christian's life so he knows in his experience that he is in the center of God's will and being directed by God. Most, if not all, problems in the directive will of God can be placed into three categories: 1) Vocation: what do you want me to do in life? 2) Location: where do you want me to live geographically? 3) Situation: seeking divine guidance and knowing God's will for every situation.

How Is the Directive  
Will of God Determined?

## **Primary Methods. There are four primary methods for determining the directive will of God.**

1. **Bible.** The Bible is the first and primary source for determining God's directive will. One must know the commands and principles of Scripture and apply these to one's experience. It is never the will of God to do anything if it is contrary to any biblical command or principle (Col. 1:9).
2. **Prayer.** One must pray honestly for God's will over any matter, making it known to God that He is willing and ready to do anything God reveals to him. If a person is not open and honest before God in prayer, then he will never know the directive will of God.
3. **Fellowship.** It is important that a Christian be in fellowship with Christ at all times. Where we are and what we are to do are not nearly so important as what we are to God. He wants us to be constantly in fellowship with Christ at all times no matter what the circumstances may be.
4. **Common Sense.** A Christian must use all of his God-given natural faculties in studying all factors in finding the will of God. However, all reasoning must be directed by biblical principles and bathed in prayers, for the mind is still tainted by sin and the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.
5. **Conviction.** Quite often the Holy Spirit gives a strong conviction which cannot be shaken. It is the still small voice of God speaking to the conscience that we are to do something for Him. The inner witness of the Spirit is a reality for every Christian in fellowship with his Lord.

## **Secondary Methods**

1. **Circumstances.** God may lead by opening and closing doors (Col. 4:3). The Christian should pray, "If this is not your will, Lord, then shut every door, no matter what it may cost me personally."
2. **Counsel.** It is always wise to seek out the counsel of another Christian or Christians to talk over the matter (Prov. 15:22). The counsel may be rejected, but it is good to get wisdom from older, more mature Christians. The facts, or the clarification of facts, may come through a counselor, but the leading must come from the Lord. To reject the advice of a counselor is not always wrong, especially if a person has a strong conviction from the Lord that he is to do something.

3. **Peace.** If God is in some move, He will give a peace which passes all human understanding (Col. 3:15). A person should pray until he has divine peace. He may be afraid emotionally of the situation but may have peace that he is doing the right thing.

Knowing the will of God is what Acts 21:1-26 is all about. The Apostle Paul had to know the will of God for his life in the same way we have to know the will of God for our lives, and he struggled with and faced the same kind of problems about the will of God as we do. ([Acts 21:1-14 The Will of God](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [The Will Of God](#)
- [How can I know God's will for my life? What does the Bible say about knowing God's will?](#)
- [How can I know when God is telling me to do something?](#)
- [How can we recognize the voice of God?](#)
- [Does God have a plan for me?](#)
- [How can I find my spiritual calling?](#)
- [1 Thessalonians 4:3 Commentary](#)
- [Colossians 1:9 Commentary](#)
- [Colossians 4:12 Commentary](#)
- [Ephesians 1:11-12 Commentary](#)
- [Ephesians 5:17-18 Commentary](#)
- [Romans 12:2 Commentary](#)
- [Will - Thelema \(Greek Word Study\)](#)

**Acts 21:5 When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another.**

KJV Acts 21:5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

- **they all...escorted us** 15:3; 17:10; 20:38
- **with wives and children** Dt 29:11,12; Josh 24:15; 2 Chr 20:13; Neh 12:43; Mt 14:21
- **After kneeling down on the beach and praying** Acts 9:40; 20:36; 1 Kings 8:54; Ps 95:6; Mark 1:40
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### TIME TO SET SAIL TIME TO PRAY

**When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey** - The days refers to the seven days to unload the ship. Ended is the rare verb *exartizo* which means to furnish perfectly and in this context means to "finish the exact number of days (seven)."

**Ended** (1822) ([exartizo](#) from **ek** = out or used to intensive meaning + **artios** = fit, complete, capable from root **ar-** which indicates appropriateness, suitability, usefulness, aptitude) means to completely outfit, fully furnish, fully equip or supply. **Exartizo** was used of a wagon or rescue boat which was completely outfitted or of a machine sold in good condition and capable of performing the service expected of it. In the present passage *exartizo* conveys the sense of accomplishing the days, finishing the time (the seven days) during which they had to remain for the cargo to be unloaded.

**While they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city** - So here we see an impromptu prayer meeting reminiscent of the departure from the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:36-38). It is notable and perhaps somewhat surprising that this is the first time Luke mentions children in connection with the apostolic churches.

**THOUGHT** - Don't miss Luke's use of the little adjective "**all**!" (i.e., "[en masse](#)"!) In our busy culture in America to get "**all**" of the church together for anything would take a miracle of God! This is sad, for people are missing out on what God is doing in the assembled body. These believers at Tyre did not want to miss out on saying farewell to the greatest apostle in the history of the church! Are you forsaking your assembling together (and

this includes the prayer meetings!!!)? (cf Heb 10:25+) **If so, you can be sure that you are missing out on something God is doing!**

**Guzik** - The practice of walking with a traveler to the outskirts of the city was traditional; yet the practice of kneeling on the shore together for prayer was uniquely Christian. (Enduring Word Bible Commentary – Acts)

**Jack Andrews** - They didn't just send the pastor out to send them off, but the whole church accompanied the missionaries back to the ship. Not just the men of the church, but their wives and their children. This was a big deal for the church at Tyre. They had shown Christian hospitality to the servants of God and they had shown Christian love to their brothers in Christ. This again was a send-off to remember! Luke records the people that went out with them. This was an all-inclusive send-off! They were taking full advantage of their time together and their opportunity that was before them. (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts)

**Escorted** (accompanied) ([4311](#))([propempe](#) from **pró** = before, + **pémpe** = to send) literally means to send before. In the NT the idea is to send forward on one's journey, to bring someone on his way, especially to accompany for some distance in token of respect and honor (as in the present passage). **Polhill** adds that "**Propempō** is used of accompanying or escorting people to their point of departure and often has the additional nuance of giving them food and provisions for their journey. That may well have been the case in this instance." ([NAC](#))

## **PRAYER IS APPROPRIATE ANYWHERE AND EVERYWHERE**

God is omnipresent, so don't worry about Him not being attentive to your prayers! (Unless of course Ps 66:18 is true of you.)

**Arnold** - Prayer may be made in any position, but the best position is that of **kneeling**, for it produces an outward attitude of humility and submission.

**Robertson** - This scene is in public as at Miletus, but they did not care.

**After kneeling down on the beach and praying ([proseuchomai](#)), we said farewell to one another** - It is notable that Tyre was known for its smooth sand beaches. Ponder this a moment. Paul had never met these disciples as far as we know and yet here we see clear evidence of a bond. Were they all Jewish believers? Or were there some Gentile believers? Luke does not tell us, but regardless we know from Paul's other writings that Christ reconciled both groups in "one body to God through the Cross, by it having put to death the enmity." (Eph 2:16), so that we all "are members of His body" (Eph 5:30), "called in one body" (Col 3:15), "one body and one Spirit." (Eph 4:4). Believers are all in the same family (Jn 1:12, 1 Jn 3:1) and so it is not surprising that in only seven days the Spirit had grown a mutual love between Paul (and Luke, et al) and the disciples at Tyre. The scene in Tyre is much like Acts 20:38+ where the Ephesian elders were "grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him (PAUL) to the ship."

And in **kneeling down on the beach and praying**, we see an example of Col 4:2 where Paul wrote "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving," and also his exhortation in 1 Th 5:17 to "pray without ceasing." They kneeled on the sand, not the most comfortable situation, but this depicts the fact that they interpreted prayer as vital to the spiritual health of the body. How is your church doing? Are all the men, women and children attending the weekly prayer meetings? Or do you even have a weekly prayer meeting?

**Kneeling** is actually two words - gonu (knee) and tithemi (place, set).

### **Related Resource:**

- [What does the Bible say about bowing or kneeling in prayer?](#)

**Andrews** has a cogent comment - We cannot overemphasize the importance of prayer. Through the book of Acts we have reiterated the practice and the power of prayer. The church is often seen in prayer—they engaged in ministry by prayer. They preached sermons by prayer—they ministered to the needy by prayer. The church at Tyre—the men, their wives, and the children, along with the missionaries came to the shore, knelt down and prayed together. Kneeling down is a picture and posture of surrender and submissiveness. The church sent the missionaries off on the right note! When we part with brothers and sisters may we learn to send them off with prayer! (Ibid)

**Larkin** offers a good word - The bonds of Christian fellowship forged in this short week are strong, and they cannot but help give strength to the apostle as he continues down the road to certain suffering. We too should never miss an opportunity, by fellowship and prayer, to strengthen the determination of fellow Christians as they face hard tests. (Ibid)



**Barnes:** On the shore. Any place may be proper for prayer. John 4:21, also John 4:22- 24. God is everywhere, and can as easily hear the prayer of the humble on the sea-shore as in the most magnificent temple. This is an instance, as well as that in Acts 20:36, where the apostle evidently prayed with the church without a form of prayer. No man can believe that he thus poured forth the desires of his heart at parting, and commended them to God, in a prescribed form of words. Besides that, there is not the least evidence that such a form was then used in the Christian church: scenes like this show more clearly than abstract arguments could do, that such a form was not needed, and would not be used. Paul and his fellow Christians, on the sand of the sea-shore, would pour forth the gushing emotions of their souls in language such as their circumstances would suggest, and such as such a scene would demand. And it is presumed to be impossible that any man can read this narrative in a dispassionate manner without believing that they offered an extempore prayer.

**Beach** (123)(aigialos from **aisso** = to rush + **hals** = sea) describes that over which the sea (hals) rushes (aisso). Seashore. **Strand**. **Aigialos** is used in Matthew 13:2 where Jesus spoke from a boat to the multitude on the "shore" (beach). **Louw-Nida** - "a strip of land immediately bordering the edge of a body of water and gradually sloping down into the water."

**Aigialos** - 6v - Matt. 13:2; Matt. 13:48; Jn. 21:4; Acts 21:5; Acts 27:39; Acts 27:40. Not found in the Septuagint (except possibly Jdg 5:17).

**ILLUSTRATION - The Heating Plant** - Five young college students were spending a Sunday in London, so they went to hear the famed [C H Spurgeon](#) preach. While waiting for the doors to open, the students were greeted by a man who asked, "Gentlemen, let me show you around. Would you like to see the heating plant of this church?" They were not particularly interested, for it was a hot day in July. But they didn't want to offend the stranger, so they consented. The young men were taken down a stairway, a door was quietly opened, and their guide whispered, "This is our heating plant." Surprised, the students saw 700 people bowed in prayer, seeking a blessing on the service that was soon to begin in the auditorium above. Softly closing the door, the gentleman then introduced himself. It was none other than [Charles Haddon Spurgeon](#). —[Our Daily Bread](#)

#### Related Resources:

- [Colossians 1:9 Commentary](#)
- [Colossians 4:12 Commentary](#)
- [Devotional on Prayer](#)
- [Guide to Praying for Missionaries](#)
- [Pithy Prayer Phrases](#)
- [Prayer - Greek Words for Prayer](#)
- [Prayer Devotionals and Illustrations](#)
- [Prayer Hymns and Poems](#)
- [Prayer Quotes](#)
- [Prayer Quotes, Devotionals and Illustrations](#)
- [Praying for People from Every Tribe, Tongue, People and Nation](#)
- [Praying His Word](#)
- [Praying in the Spirit](#)
- [Spurgeon's Gems on Prayer](#)

**Acts 21:6 Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again.**

KJV Acts 21:6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

- **Then we went on board the ship** 2 Cor 2:13
- **they returned home again.** John 1:11; John 7:53; 16:32; 19:27
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## COMING DOWN OFF THE MOUNTAIN TOP

This would surely go down as one of the most momentous weeks in the life of all of these believers, to have had a personal 7 day seminar from God's greatest apostle. Their lives would (or certainly should) never be the same. But of course the danger of "mountain top" experiences is that we have to return back to earth and to the mundane and routine and are in danger of become

depressed, disconsolate or even vulnerable to temptation.

**Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again** - **Home again** is an [idiom](#) (*eis to idia*) meaning "to their own." This identical phrase in Jn. 1:11 (Jesus came **to His own**); Jn. 16:32 ("to his own"); Jn. 19:27 ("into his own" of John taking Mary into his own home at the request of Jesus on the Cross) and here in Acts 21:6

**Acts 21:7 When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day.**

KJV Acts 21:7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

- **after greeting the brethren** Acts 21:19; 18:22; 25:13; 1 Sa 10:4; 13:10; Mt 5:47; Heb 13:24
- **we stayed with them for a day** Acts 21:10; 28:12
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**When we had finished the voyage from Tyre**, (see [map](#)) **we arrived at Ptolemais** (see [map](#)) - **Ptolemais** was known as **Acco** (Jdg 1:31), today spelled **Acre** ([see note](#)) and was about 25 miles south of Tyre. **Ptolemais** was a Roman colony settled by [Claudius](#) who had settled a group of veterans in the city.

**Utle** on **Ptolemais** - This city was named after Alexander the Great's general who ruled in Egypt and was an ancestor of Ptolemy II who built this city in 26 B.C. This is the only natural port on the Palestinian coast. In the OT it was called Acco (cf. Judges 1:31). Today it is called by its Crusader name, Acre.

**And after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day**- **The brethren** presumably refers to the disciples in **Ptolemais** and like the disciples in Tyre (Acts 21:4, cf Acts 21:16) were likely the fruit of the Jerusalem persecution (Acts 11:19-). What a joy to find disciples in every city, even ones he had never evangelized, living testimony to Luke's description in Acts 19:20+ that "the Word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing." You've got to love Paul. He knows his time on earth is short (that's true of all of us beloved) and he was not one to waste an opportunity to meet with other believers. He practiced what he preached in Eph 5:15-16+ "Therefore **be careful** ([present imperative](#) - make this your habitual practice - [See Need for the Holy Spirit to obey commands](#)) how you walk ([present tense](#)), not as unwise men but as wise, making the most ([exagorazo](#) - [present tense](#) - also calls for dependence on the Spirit) of your time ([kairos](#) = opportunity - remember it may only knock once!!!), (WHY DO WE NEED TO USE THE PRECIOUS MOMENTS) because the days are evil."

[Jim Elliot](#) was an imitating the pattern of Paul when he declared "Wherever you are, be all there. Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God." Wherever Paul was, Paul was all there! Does that describe your spiritual walk and ministry? It should. It can. Learn to quit trying and start daily dying, relying not on self but on the Spirit and He will guide you (Gal 5:18+, cf Gal 5:16+) and empower you (Acts 1:8+) to "be all there" where "there" is in God's providence.

#### Related Resources:

- [Redeem the Time](#)
- Listen and watch this poignant video as you consider the brevity of the days of your life - [Redeem the Time - David Smallwood](#)
- [Ephesians 5:15-16 Commentary](#)

**Acts 21:8 On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.**

KJV Acts 21:8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

- **we left** Acts 16:10,13,16; 20:6,13; 27:1; 28:11,16
- **Caesarea** Acts 8:40; 9:30; 10:1; 18:22; 23:23
- **Philip** Acts 6:5; 8:5-13,26-40
- **the evangelist** Eph 4:11; 2 Ti 4:5
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PHILIP THE "GOOD NEWS GIVER"

Wouldn't you like a [nickname](#) like that? To be sure all believers are called to "shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE." (Eph 6:15<sup>+</sup>). Dear fellow laborer in Christ, what "brand" shoes are you wearing - Gucci or Good News?

**On the next day we left and came to Caesarea**, (see [map](#), [another map](#) - see [Akre = Ptolemais on left side](#)) - This was a journey of about 40 miles to [Caesarea](#) which was the designated port of the city of Jerusalem built by Herod which was about 60 miles southeast and was the seat of the Roman rule in Judea. Archaeologists have found remains of the harbor, seaside vaulted wharfs, important administrative buildings, a theater, and a second-century ad aqueduct. It was named after Emperor Caesar Augustus, and the Roman procurators used it as their headquarters (cf. Acts 24:1; 25:6). It would have been the official residence of the Roman governor (e.g., Pontius Pilate). This is the third time that we have seen Paul in Caesarea, first on his journey from Jerusalem to Tarsus (Acts 9:30), second on his return from Antioch at the close of the second missionary journey (Acts 18:22) and now in Acts 21:8.

### Caesarea in Acts -

Acts 8:40; Acts 9:30; Acts 10:1; Acts 10:24; Acts 11:11; Acts 12:19; Acts 18:22; Acts 21:8; Acts 21:16; Acts 23:23; Acts 23:33; Acts 25:1; Acts 25:4; Acts 25:6; Acts 25:13

**And entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him**- Philip the evangelist is not to be confused with the apostle by that name. Philip had lived in Caesarea for about 20 years prior to Paul's arrival. Philip would have been one of the believers Saul would have tried to have jailed or even worse, and yet now, the transformative power of the Gospel has brought them together in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3<sup>+</sup>). And don't forget that Philip had been an associate of Stephen, in whose martyrdom Paul had played a role (Acts 8:1<sup>+</sup>), which would make this a most interesting meeting! Philip was supernaturally enabled to forgive because "God in Christ" had forgiven him (Eph 4:32<sup>+</sup>) illustrating the truth of Col 3:13<sup>+</sup> that "just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."

**THOUGHT** - Is this not a manifestation of how amazing God's grace can be regarding a believer being enabled to grant forgiveness! Beloved, if Philip could receive Paul into his home, this begs the question -- are you wrestling with forgiving anyone? Then take a lesson from Philip, a man surely filled with (controlled by) the Holy Spirit (cf Acts 6:3<sup>+</sup>) and grant forgiveness to the one who has offended you! Remember that of all the prayer points in the Lord's (really "Disciple's") prayer **forgiveness** garnered the most attention!

And **forgive** us our debts, as we also have forgiven ([aphiemi](#)) our debtors....For if you forgive ([aphiemi](#)) others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive ([aphiemi](#)) you. But if you do not forgive ([aphiemi](#)) others, then your Father will not forgive ([aphiemi](#)) your transgressions. (cf Mt 6:12<sup>+</sup>, Mt 6:14-15<sup>+</sup>)

As **Paul** explained in his letter to the **Galatians**...

I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." And they were glorifying God because of me. (Gal 1:22-24<sup>+</sup>). Amazing grace indeed!

**Evangelist** (2099)([euaggelistes](#) from [euaggelizo/euangelizo](#) = to evangelize) ([euaggelion](#) = gospel) ([Evangelist](#)) are those possessed a special gift of communicating the Gospel in relevant terms to those who are not yet Christians. The evangelist was (and is) primarily responsible for the numerical growth of the body of Christ (the "obstetrician" who birthed saints through the gospel). He was the bringer of good tidings. Only 3 NT uses - Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11<sup>+</sup>; 2 Ti 4:5<sup>+</sup>. No other person in the NT is specifically called an "Evangelist" although Paul did command Timothy to "**do** ([aorist imperative](#) = "Just do it!") the work of an evangelist" (2 Ti 4:5<sup>+</sup>). In Acts 8:40 the verb euaggelizo was used

An **evangelist** knew the gospel narrative thoroughly and was capable of explaining it. They were traveling or itinerant missionaries preaching the gospel to the unconverted and calling them to repentance. It is important to note that the purpose of evangelization is to carefully but simply help unbelievers become aware of their sinfulness and lostness and through the proclamation of the Gospel to proclaim Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord. Any human manipulation in that process, no matter how well intentioned, always becomes a barrier to genuine belief.

**Philip** had preached the Gospel to the ["half breed Samaritans"](#) (Acts 8:5-8<sup>+</sup>; [Who were the Samaritans?](#)), to the [Ethiopian eunuch](#) (Acts 8:26-38<sup>+</sup>) and from [Azotus](#) as he passed through "he kept **preaching the Gospel** ([euaggelizo](#) - [imperfect tense](#) = over and over) to all the cities until he came to Caesarea." (Acts 8:40<sup>+</sup>)

The phrase **who was one of the seven** refers to Acts 6 when the first church selected Spirit filled deacons to carry out service so the apostle could focus on the Word. Luke recorded that the congregation's choice of seven men "**Stephen**, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and **Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas** and **Nicolas**, a proselyte from Antioch." (Acts 6:5+).

#### Acts 21:9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.

KJV Acts 21:9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

NET Acts 21:9 He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

- **had four virgin daughters** 1 Cor 7:25-34,38
- **who were prophetesses** Acts 2:17; Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Neh 6:14; Joel 2:28; 1 Cor 11:4,5; Rev 2:20
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Now this man had four virgin daughters** - Philip's daughters had never been married. Apparently they had been set apart by God as prophetesses.

**Virgin** (3933)(**parthenos**) generally is used of a female who is beyond puberty but not married and still a virgin. In 2 Cor 11:2 parthenos is used figuratively of the church, the bride pledged to Christ.. Some contexts do not focus on the meaning virginity. The clear sense of **parthenos** in Mt 1:23 quoted from Isa 7:14+ (Lxx uses parthenos for Hebrew - '**almah**') is of a woman who has not been intimate with a man (cp Lk 1:27). Paul uses parthenos in First Corinthians to refer to a woman of marriageable age. In Mt 25:1, 7, 11 **parthenos** refers to young women of marriageable age.

**Parthenos** 15x in 14v in the NT - NAS = chaste(1), virgin(9), virgin's(1), virgins(4).

Matt. 1:23; Matt. 25:1; Matt. 25:7; Matt. 25:11; Lk. 1:27; Acts 21:9; 1 Co. 7:25; 1 Co. 7:28; 1 Co. 7:34; 1 Co. 7:36; 1 Co. 7:37; 1 Co. 7:38; 2 Co. 11:2; Rev. 14:4

Luke makes no record that they prophesied regarding Paul and since he mentions a specific prophecy by Agabus it would be futile to speculate further on how they were involved in ministry. They are intriguing but unfortunately will remain somewhat mysterious until we get to Heaven!

**Who were prophetesses** (4395)(**propheteuo** from **pró** = before or forth + **phemi** = tell) means literally to tell forth and can mean to speak forth God's message, not necessarily referring to speaking of future events. In other contexts to prophesy means to speak under inspiration and foretell future events. In this context the meaning could be either sense, although if the latter, it would imply that they were prophesying falsely in His name, because the canon of revelation is complete. The only legitimate prophesying in this age is to speak forth God's Word.

**Prophetess** in Scripture - Ex 15:20; Jdg. 4:4; 2 Ki 22:14; 2 Chr 34:22; Neh. 6:14; Isa. 8:3; Lk. 2:36; Acts 21:9; Rev. 2:20

#### Related Resource:

- [What is a prophetess? Does the Bible mention any prophetesses?](#)

**Guzik** remarks that "It's interesting that with these four daughters who had the gift of prophecy, none of them seemed to tell Paul anything about his upcoming time in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit could have used them, but He chose to use someone else." (Ibid)

**John MacArthur** - Luke records no details regarding Philip's daughters' prophetic ministry. It is therefore impossible to know how often they prophesied or even if they did so more than once. However the New Testament does not permit women to assume the role of preachers or teachers in the church (1 Cor. 14:34-36; 1 Tim. 2:11-12). It is likely, therefore, that they prophesied by receiving divine revelation, rather than preaching sermons. It is also possible that they spoke instructively to individuals rather than to congregations. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Jack Arnold** on the **prophetesses** - Since Scripture does not contradict itself, we can assume these women did their prophesying outside the local church, but they were active in the ministry. "Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says" (1 Cor. 14:34). This verse shows that women did occupy a prominent place in the ministry of the early church. It is interesting to note that from the last time Philip is mentioned in Acts 8, there is 20 years of silence. What was he doing those many years? We don't know for sure, but we can be quite definite that he was still evangelizing and he had been raising four daughters in a Christ-centered home who grew up to love Christ. The will of God for

Philip was not only to win men to Christ but to raise children under the sound of the gospel and win them to Christ. Raising children for Christ is one of the most important ministries in the world and to dodge this responsibility is a clear denial of the revealed will of God. ([Acts 21:1-14 The Will of God](#))

**Utley** writes "We need to rethink our position on women in leadership positions (cf. Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2:16–21) in the church based on all of NT evidence. [See Special Topic: Women in the Bible](#). The issue is ambiguous."

**F F Bruce** has an anecdotal extra-Biblical note - According to ancient records, "The daughters, or at least some of them, lived to a great age, and were highly esteemed as informants on persons and events belonging to the early years of Judean Christianity."

**William MacDonald** - This means they were gifted by the Holy Spirit to receive messages directly from the Lord and to convey them to others. Some have inferred from this verse that it is permissible for women to preach and teach in the church. However, since it is expressly forbidden for women to teach, speak, or have authority over the men in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:11, 12), it can only be concluded that the prophetic ministry of these four virgin daughters was carried on in the home or in other non-church gatherings. (Believer's Bible Commentary)

**Jack Andrews** makes a good point commenting that "We know that these ladies didn't take it upon themselves to teach or take authority over the men in the church—case in point is in the following verses. The prophet Agabus came down from Judea and there the Spirit led him to prophesy before the church and to Paul! The Lord is not the author of confusion and His Spirit does not contradict His word!" (Ibid)

#### Acts 21:10 As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

KJV Acts 21:10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

- **As we were staying there for some days** Acts 21:4,7; 20:16
- **a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea** Acts 11:28
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**As we were staying there for some days** - Luke does not tell us how long but we know that the time had to be limited by the date of the Pentecost which Paul desired to celebrate in Jerusalem.

**A prophet named Agabus came down from Judea** - This is an unusual name so that this is almost certain the same Agabus Luke had mentioned earlier.

One of them named **Agabus** stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. (Acts 11:28)

**Agabus** had proved himself a prophet as the great famine had occurred in 46 A.D. and was part of the reason Paul was bringing a collection from the saints at Macedonia for the Jerusalem church. So again he is acting as a "forth teller" predicting events that would come to pass (and again as the subsequent chapters demonstrate, he was once again accurate).

**Prophet** ([4396](#))([prophetes](#) from **próphemi** = literally to tell beforehand in turn from **pró** = before, in front of, forth, on behalf of + **phemí** = speak, tell) is primarily a forth-teller or one who speaks out God's message, primarily to their own generation, usually always calling the people to God's truth for them at that moment, often using the phrase "Thus saith the Lord." Although we commonly think of the prophet as predicting future events (foretelling) generally this was secondary to his work of forth-telling. When they functioned as predictors or prognosticators, the Biblical prophets foretold the future with 100 percent accuracy. And so if they were correct on the first coming of Messiah, they will be correct on His second coming and on the coming of the antichrist. In sum, forth-telling dealt with current events and fore-telling with future events, but in both the goal is the same -- to call us to trust the Lord and submit to His will for our lives, living in conformity with His Word.

**Jack Arnold** points out that "The early church needed **prophets** for the New Testament had not been written yet. There are no **prophets** or **prophetesses** in the New Testament sense today, for we have completed written revelation in the New Testament." ([Acts 21:1-14 The Will of God](#))

## I. INSTANCES OF —

1. Joseph warning Pharaoh (Genesis 41:32, 33).
2. Moses warning the Israelites (Exodus 4:29-31).
3. Moses warning Pharaoh (Exodus 9:29, 30).
4. Joshua warning Israel (Joshua 3:9-13).
5. Nathan warning David (2 Samuel 12:7-10; 1 Kings 1:22-25).
6. A prophet warning Ahab (1 Kings 20:38, 39).
7. Elisha warning Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 3:11-13).
8. Jonah warning the Ninevites (Jonah 3:4; Matthew 12:41).
9. John the Baptist warning the Jews (Matthew 3:1, 2; Luke 3:3).
10. Agabus giving warning of a famine (Acts 11:28, 29).
11. Agabus warning Paul of danger (Acts 21:10, 11).

## II. INSPIRED BY —

1. The visions of God (2 Chronicles 26:5; Ezekiel 1:1).
2. The writing of God (1 Chronicles 28:19).
3. The Word of God (Luke 3:2).
4. The words of God (Jonah 3:1; Habakkuk 2:2).
5. The Spirit of God (1 Samuel 10:6; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:4).
6. The various agencies of God (Hebrews 1:1).

## III. NATURE OF —

1. A gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:11; Revelation 11:3).
2. Christ usually the subject of (Acts 10:43; 1 Peter 1:10, 11).
3. Concerning the need of repentance (Mark 1:4).
4. Regarding present safety (Acts 21:11).
5. Concerning eternal salvation (Revelation 14:13).
6. Regarding future events (Genesis 49:1; Numbers 24:14).

(S. S. Times.)

**Acts 21:11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"**



KJV Acts 21:11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

- **he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands** 1 Sa 15:27,28; 1 Kings 11:29-31; 2 Kings 13:15-19; Jer 13:1-11; 19:10,11; Ezek 24:19-25; Hosea Acts 12:10
- **This is what the Holy Spirit says** Acts 13:2; 16:6; 20:23; 28:25; Heb 3:7; 1 Peter 1:12
- **In this way the Jews at Jerusalem** Acts 21:33; 22:25; 24:27; 26:29; 28:20; Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; 2 Ti 2:9; Heb 10:34
- **deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles** Acts 28:17; Mt 20:18,19; 27:1,2
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A DRAMATIC ILLUSTRATION WITH DIVINE INSPIRATION

**And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands** - Talk about a dramatic word picture! Orientals would often illustrate truth in a dramatic, visual way. Agabus, like the OT prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, acted out his revelation. "Old Testament prophets often employed symbolic deeds (1 Kings 22:11; James 2:2; Jeremiah 13:1-7; Ezekiel 4:1-6). Jesus interpreted the symbolism of Peter's girding himself (John 21:18)." (Robertson)

**A T Robertson** observes three successive participles - **Coming** (elthōn, second aorist active participle of erchomai), **taking** (aras, first aorist active participle of airō, to take up), **binding** (dēsas, first aorist active participle of deō, to bind). Vivid use of three successive participles describing the dramatic action of Agabus.

**And said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says- Agabus** is speaking for God. The Holy Spirit did not forbid Paul to go to Jerusalem, but warned him of what it would cost him. But Paul had already counted the cost declaring "that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But **I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself**, so that **I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.**" (Acts 20:23-24+) Paul could have hardly been more eloquently definitive!

**In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles-** While the Jews did not themselves bind Paul, their actions resulted in Paul being arrested by **the Gentiles** (the Romans).

In Acts 9 Jesus had given a specific prophecy about Paul commanding Ananias to "Go, for he (PAUL) is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel." (Acts 9:15+).

**Polhill** - Paul would be bound by the Jews of Jerusalem and handed over to the Gentiles. The parallel to the fate of Jesus could hardly be more explicit (cf. Matt 20:18f.; Luke 18:32+)....Unlike the Christians of Tyre, he (Agabus) did not urge Paul not to go. (New American Commentary – Volume 26: Acts)

**Arnold** makes the point - Notice carefully that Agabus does not say, "It is against God's will for you to go," but "If you go, this is what will happen to you." This was just another warning given to Paul to cause him to think through his own commitment to do God's revealed will in his life, even when it meant imprisonment and death. ([Acts 21:1-14 The Will of God](#))

**Deliver** (hand over) (3860) ([paradidomi](#) from **para** = alongside, beside, to the side of, over to + **didomi** = to give) conveys the basic meaning of to give over from one's hand to someone or something, especially to give over to the power of another as in the present context. This verb was used of the betrayal of our Lord, Jesus Himself predicting they "**will hand Him over** (paradidomi) to the **Gentiles** to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up." (Mt 20:19) Jesus had in fact prophesied regarding Paul's fate warning His disciples "be on your guard; for they **will deliver** (paradidomi) you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them." (Mk. 13:9)

**Jack Andrews** makes a good point especially in our day when we occasionally hear someone say "I had a word from the Lord" - Just because someone says they are speaking for God does not mean they are speaking for God. In retrospect we look back and know that Agabus was a man of God and he did indeed have a word from God. Paul and the congregation at Caesarea knew that Agabus was a prophet and they heard his message....There is so much that passes off for being from the Lord when it is not by the Lord. Thank God for those who truly get a word from God! (**ED**: Any "word from the Lord" should be compatible with the Word of the Lord and if it is not, it is certainly not from the Lord. We must always be a Berean - Acts 17:11+!) Agabus' message was clear—Paul would be arrested in Jerusalem and then delivered over to the Gentiles. There would be no mercy shown to Paul by his fellow Jews. There would be no way out for Paul from the Jews. Paul would not be delivered from their hands this time.

KJV Acts 21:12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

- **began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem** Acts 21:4; 20:22; Mt 16:21-23
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **AIN'T TOO PROUD TO BEG**

There was an old Motown song entitled "Ain't Too Proud to Beg," which could well have been the "theme song" for these saints seeking to deter Paul's resolve.

**When we had heard this** - Now Luke is speaking in first person plural.

**We as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem**- Now even Luke joins in the chorus in an attempt to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem. Luke uses the [imperfect tense](#) to emphasize their repeated attempts to talk Paul out of going. One would implore, then another and another!

**THOUGHT** - Unlike Agabus who was guided by the Spirit, these men were not guided by the Spirit for He would never contradict Himself. It shows that even the most spiritual of men can appear quite **sincere** and "**spiritual**" (even "Spirit filled") when in fact they are not being led by the Spirit. It therefore behooves all believers when making major life decisions never to trust on the single counsel of one man (or woman) no matter how "spiritual" they are! To discern God's will it is best to use as many "counselors" as possible (pre-eminently the counsel of God's Word prayerfully relying on God's Spirit to illuminate it and to guide us - Ro 8:14, Gal 5:18). Have you ever made a major decision in reliance on only one "spiritual" person's advice and had it go "south" or "sour?" Just a thought to ponder next time you come to a major "Y" in the road of life! Be especially careful and discerning when someone comes to you (perhaps even "out of the blue") and says I need to tell you something - "I heard a word from the Lord I am to speak to you." BE CAREFUL!!!

**David Guzik** makes a cogent point that "Paul had received several prophetic words on this very topic. This is God's custom with such a remarkable prophecy, that there should be great deal of confirmation, as there was in Macedonia (Acts 20:22-23), in Tyre (Acts 21:4) and now in Caesarea....The warnings from the Holy Spirit were intended to prepare Paul, not to stop him." (Enduring Word Bible Commentary – Acts)

**Robertson** - This dramatic warning of Agabus came on top of that in Tyre (Acts 21:4) and Paul's own confession in Miletus (Acts 20:23). It is small wonder that Luke and the other messengers together with Philip and his daughters (prophetesses versus prophet?) joined in a chorus of dissuasion to Paul.

**Hughes** - In attempting to turn Paul away from Jerusalem, his friends demonstrated that their spiritual focus was more horizontal than vertical. Their love and loyalty were commendable—they wanted to preserve Paul. But their motives, though noble, were shortsighted. These Christians were not seeing God's ultimate purposes. They were looking out for Paul's good but not God's. (Preaching the Word – Acts: The Church Afire)

**Began begging** (3870) ([parakaleo](#) from **para** = side of, alongside, beside + [kaleo](#) = call) means literally to call one alongside, to call someone to oneself, to call for, to summon. **Parakaleo** can include the idea of giving help or aid but the primary sense in the NT is to urge someone to take some action, especially some ethical course of action.

**Jack Arnold** has an interesting note - Paul was given counsel by his friends, but in this case they had not understood the predictions of Agabus correctly. This tells us that counselors can be wrong in giving advice, especially if they do not have all the facts or misinterpret the facts as Paul's friends did. Also, their emotional love for Paul took over their reasoning power so they gave the wrong advice. They were actually subtly trying to keep Paul from doing the will of God. Luke and the other disciples had a pure motive for not wanting Paul to go, but Paul had a higher motive--the revealed will of God that he was to go to Jerusalem and his desire to win men for Christ. Paul, in this case, ignored the advice of other spiritual men because he had the inward conviction of the Holy Spirit that he was to go to Jerusalem. In finding God's directive will, God may use counselors, but ultimately God must bring the understanding of His will to the one who is seeking God's will. Counselors can clarify facts, give illustrations from their own experience or the experiences of others and warn of danger, but ultimately God must lead the person seeking God's will for his life. If, after advice, a person still feels he must do what God is telling him to do, then we must encourage and not discourage him in

whatever he feels God would have him to do. It is a very serious matter to play God so as to discourage another Christian from doing the will of God. ([Acts 21:1-14 The Will of God](#))

**ILLUSTRATION OF LISTENING TO ONE'S FRIENDS TO DISCERN THE WILL OF GOD** - At the time of the Reformation in England, one of the converts to Christ was [Thomas Bilney](#), a student at Cambridge. Bilney got hold of a Greek New Testament and read the words, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." God used this verse to open up his eyes to the fact that salvation is all by God's grace and appropriated through faith in Christ. He became a powerful voice for Christ. Then came the counter-reformation and many reformers were burnt at the stake if they would not recant their biblical beliefs. Bilney was imprisoned and was told to recant or face death by flames. Friends urged him to recant. Just two days before he was to be burned, his friends poured into the prison, overwhelming him with arguments and examples of why he should recant. But Bilney had an inward struggle which agitated his soul, for he felt he had a conviction from the Holy Spirit that he should die. The words of the Bible, "Whosoever will save his life will lose it," went through his mind over and over again. Finally Bilney broke and rationalized in his mind a compromise. He said, "I will preserve my life in order to dedicate it to the Lord." He recanted and within a few months Bilney, ridden with guilt, confused in mind, began to give up the Christian Faith altogether. Having denied the Word of God, he could no longer bear to hear it. He wandered from the faith and finally one day, overburdened by grief, he fell as lifeless into the arms of his friends. They knew they had caused his fall and they cried out, "God by a just judgment deliver up to the tempest of their conscience all who deny Christ's truth," referring to themselves who were instruments in Bilney's rejection of the revealed will of God. This apparent apostasy by Bilney went on for several years but gradually Bilney returned to the Faith. Again he became a strong voice for Christ and again he was arrested and told to recant or be burned at the stake. Bilney, having learned his lesson, refused to give up his beliefs about Christ. The night before he was to be executed by fire, he stretched his hand out towards the lamp that was burning on the table. He placed his finger in the flame and kept it there until his finger had burned off to the joint. He then said to his friends, "I am persuaded, by God's holy Word and the experience of martyrs, that when the flames consume me, I shall not feel them. However, this stubble of a body shall be wasted by it, a pain for the time will be followed by joy unspeakable. The next day he descended into the [Lollard's Pit](#) where many Christian martyrs had gone up in flames ([picture](#)). He fell on his knees and prayed. Then rising up, warmly embracing the stake, he kissed it. What is the lesson? Bilney's friends almost ruined him. When someone is set on the will of God, don't try to talk him out of it! (Jack Arnold)

**Acts 21:13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."**

KJV Acts 21:13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

- **What are you doing** 1 Sa 15:14; Isaiah 3:15; Ezek 18:2; Jonah 1:6
- **weeping and breaking my heart** Acts 20:37; 1 Sa 1:8; Phil 2:26; 2 Ti 1:4
- **For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem** Acts 20:24; Ro 8:35-37; 1 Cor 15:31; 2 Cor 4:10-17; 11:23-27; Phil 1:20,21; Phil 2:17; Col 1:24; 2 Ti 2:4-6; 4:6; 2 Peter 1:14; Rev 3:10; 12:11
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **BREAKING PAUL'S HEART**

**Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? - What are doing** was a strong protest (like that in Mk 11:5). Luke had only said they were begging Paul (Acts 21:12), but now we see they did so with tears, expressive of their deep love and concern for their beloved Paul. **Weeping** is in the [present tense](#) indicating it was continuous.

**Weeping** (2799)([klaio](#)) means to mourn, to weep, to lament or to wail with emphasis upon noise accompanying weeping. This description gives us quite a vivid picture of what must have been transpiring as they attempted to talk Paul out of going.

**Breaking** (4919)([sunthrupto](#) from **sun** = with, together or intensifier + **thrupto** = to break in pieces, crumble, crush) means literally to crush together into pieces and as used figuratively here means to crush Paul's spirit, break his heart, dishearten him. The upshot is to cause him great sorrow and grief. Louw-Nida says "In some languages one may even have 'to cause one's heart to cry.'" Robertson adds "So to enervate and unman one, weakening Paul's determination to go on with his duty." "The verb (sunthrupto) was often used of washing clothes and referred to pounding them with stones in order to whiten them." (Polhill)

**Jack Arnold** writes of Luther's experience with his friends which was similar to Paul's experience - "Expressions of love, even tears, are proper and inevitable when we must depart from a loved one, but emotional pleading must never be allowed to keep one from

doing the will of God as God has directed him to do. When Martin Luther was on his way to face the [Diet of Worms](#) where he was sure to conflict with religious authorities and possibly be imprisoned or put to death, his dear friend tried to dissuade him. He answered, *"If there were more devils in Worms than tiles on the roofs, still, I would go"*

**Andrews** - They were not trying to get Paul to disobey the Lord. Sometimes men and women will give us advice and they will be well intentioned, but the advice they offer will not be in line with the will of God for us. (Ibid)

**For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."** - **I am ready** = Compare Peter's words in Lk 22:33+ (but Peter was at least initially not quite ready to follow through as Paul was! Later tradition says he was crucified upside down! I would call that follow through!) There is a slight touch of irony in Paul's statement he is **willing to be bound**. Why? Because **bound** (deo) was used first in Acts to describe Paul's attitude and actions against the believers "to **bind** all who call on Your name." (Acts 9:14+, cf Acts 9:21+)! The brethren including Dr Luke had misunderstood the application of Agabus' prophecy and thus tried to prohibit Paul's journey to Jerusalem. Paul was moved by their love, but he would not be deterred from going, for he had already discerned that it was the Lord's will for him to go to Jerusalem as Luke had recorded in Acts 20.

"And now, behold, bound (same verb "deo" used in present passage "to be bound") by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. (Acts 20:22, 23+)

Paul clearly had the mindset he later described in Galatians

"I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I who live**, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20+)

And to the Philippians he wrote

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (Phil 1:21+)

And remember Paul's charge to all of us...

**Be** (present imperative = Command to Make this your lifestyle - [only possible as we depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) imitators ([mimetes](#)) of me, just as I also am of Christ (See [Walking Like Jesus Walked](#)). (1 Cor 11:1+)

Paul's attitude regarding our short, temporal life begs the question of all of us - Simply put, how are you doing? Are you living for this life or the next? See [Francis Chan's dramatic illustration of eternity](#) compared to this present life if you need some motivation to imitate Paul!

**Jack Andrews** comments that "Paul had effectively denied himself, took up his cross daily, and followed Jesus! Paul wasn't ready to die for just any cause, but he was ready to die for Christ. He didn't waste his life on the temporary things of this world, but he gave his life for the eternal things of God. **Oswald Chambers** wrote, "To choose to suffer means that there is something wrong; to choose God's will even if it means suffering is a very different thing. No healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not." (Read full devotional - [The Sacrament of the Saint](#)) (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts)

**Robertson** - Paul's readiness to die, if need be, at Jerusalem is like that of Jesus on the way to Jerusalem the last time. Even before that Luke (Luke 9:51+) said that "he set his face to go on to Jerusalem." Later the disciples will say to Jesus, "Master, the Jews were but now seeking to stone thee; and goest thou thither?" (John 11:8). The stature of Paul rises here to heroic proportions "for the name of the Lord Jesus"

**ILLUSTRATION** - [Stonewall Jackson](#) - The courage of Civil War leader Stonewall Jackson in the midst of conflict can be a lesson for the believer. Historian Mark Brimsley wrote, "A battlefield is a deadly place, even for generals; and it would be naive to suppose Jackson never felt the animal fear of all beings exposed to wounds and death. but invariably he displayed extraordinary calm under fire, a calm too deep and masterful to be mere pretense. His apparent obliviousness to danger attracted notice, and after the First Manassas battle someone asked him how he managed it. "My religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed," Jackson explained. 'God knows the time for my death. I do not concern myself about that, but to be always ready, no matter where it may overtake me.' He added pointedly, 'That is the way all men should live, and than all would be equally brave.'" - Daily Bread

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## People Of Courage

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. —2 Timothy 1:7

Police found it hard to believe, but an unarmed housewife captured three burglars singlehandedly. The woman had come home and

found three men loading household items into their car parked in her driveway. She pulled her van behind their car and then ordered the men to carry her belongings back into the house and sit on the couch until the police arrived. Later, when asked why they didn't escape, she replied, "The Lord was with me. . . . I wasn't going to move my van so they could get away. What was I to do? Run away?"

The apostle Paul also showed unusual courage. His friends probably thought he was being reckless when he insisted on going to Jerusalem after he had been warned of the danger that awaited him (Acts 21:11-13). A strong argument could be made for him to delay his trip. After all, on another occasion he had escaped from danger (9:23-25). Yet Paul knew what he had to do. With unwavering determination he courageously headed for Jerusalem.

It's not easy to know when such boldness is wise or foolish. Only the Spirit can show us. But one thing is sure, Christians have reason to be courageous. God is our helper. And when we rely on Him, He'll enable us to stand firm no matter what danger we may face. By Mart DeHaan Reflect & Pray ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Ask God for good judgment and courage  
To face unexpected events;  
To follow the teachings of Scripture  
Is the best, most effective defense.  
—Hess

Courage is fear that has said its prayers.

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### For The Name Of The Lord

I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. —Acts 21:13

Matthew Henry, the famous Bible scholar, was once accosted by thieves and robbed. In his diary, he wrote: "Let me be thankful first, because I was never robbed before; second, because they took my purse and not my life; third, because although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed."

For Matthew Henry, doing God's will was far more important than what had happened to him. The apostle Paul also demonstrated this attitude as he was told about his future. Though the prophet Agabus had foretold his imprisonment in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11), Paul was undeterred. His desire was to do God's will and fulfill His purpose for his life, no matter what might happen to him. Paul desired to obey the Lord for His name's sake.

None of us knows what tomorrow holds. Sometimes God's will involves walking through "the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:4). At other times we may have to choose the path of hardship because we wish to do what is right, rather than what is easy.

In all of life's difficulties, we can remember that obeying God's will "for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13) is far more important than what may happen to us. —By Albert Lee ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We go in faith, our own great weakness feeling,  
And needing more each day Thy grace to know;  
Yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing:  
We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go.  
—Cherry

What we call adversity, God calls opportunity.

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**Martin Luther - Doing God's Will** - On April 14, 1521 Martin Luther was on his way to the Diet of Worms. The emperor had forbidden the sale of all the reformer's books and ordered them to be seized. Luther's life was in great danger. Luther's devoted friend and confidant, George Spalatin, had sent word through a special messenger not to come to Worms lest he suffer the same fate as John Hus. Luther comforted his fearful friends, saying, "Though Hus was burned, the truth was not burned, and Christ still lives." Then he sent Spalatin the now famous message, "I shall go to Worms, though there were as many devils as tiles on the roofs."

On April 16 Luther entered Worms in a Saxon two-wheeled cart preceded by an imperial herald. Although it was the dinner hour, 2,000 people were present to observe his entrance. On the following day at four o'clock Luther stood before "Charles, heir of a long line of Catholic sovereigns—of Maximillian the romantic, of Ferdinand the Catholic, of Isabella the orthodox—scion of the house of



Hapsburg, lord of Austria, Burgundy, the Low Countries, Spain, and Naples, Holy Roman Emperor, ruling over a vaster domain than any save Charlemagne, symbol of the medieval unities, incarnation of a glorious if vanishing heritage." Most men of God would have been intimidated. After an exchange between the Archbishop of Trier, Johann Eck, and Martin Luther, the Augustinian monk, overwhelmed by the immensity of what he was doing, requested and received the night for prayer and consideration. We can be sure Luther really prayed that night.

How frail and sensitive is the flesh of men, and the devil so powerful and active through his apostles and the wise of the world!... O Thou, my God, my God, help me against the reason and wisdom of all the world! Do this! Thou must do it, Thou alone! For this cause is not mine but Thine. For myself I have no business here with these great lords of the world. Indeed, I too, desire to enjoy days of peace and quiet and to be undisturbed. But Thine, O Lord, is this cause. And it is righteous and of eternal importance. Stand by me, Thou faithful, eternal God! I rely on no man...

O God, stand by me in the name of Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, who shall be my Protector and Defender, yea, my mighty Fortress, through the might and strengthening of Thy Holy Spirit.

On April 18 a larger hall was chosen but was so crowded that scarcely any save the emperor could sit down. Finally came this famous dialogue:

ECK: Martin, how can you assume that you are the only one to understand the sense of Scripture? Would you put your judgment above that of so many famous men and claim that you know more than they all? You have no right to call into question the most holy orthodox faith, instituted by Christ the perfect lawgiver, proclaimed throughout the world by the apostles, sealed by the red blood of the martyrs, confirmed by the sacred councils, defined by the Church in which all our fathers believed until death and gave to us as an inheritance, and which now we are forbidden by the pope and emperor to discuss lest there be no end of debate. I ask you, Martin—answer candidly and without horns—do you or do you not repudiate your books and the errors which they contain?

LUTHER: Since then Your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.

It was the greatest moment in the modern history of the world! How did Martin Luther come to such heroics—standing alone before the world, risking his life for the sake of God's truth? *He knew God's will.* He knew through the examination of God's Word while a monk in Wittenberg and through his subsequent encounter with God in Bologna and on his knees in Pilate's staircase in Rome that "The just shall live by faith." He knew that it was God's will for him to go to Worms and declare the truth to the world regardless of the consequences. Furthermore, Martin Luther *did* God's will, and this is what set him apart from ordinary men. (From [Preaching the Word – Acts: The Church Afire](#))

**Henry Trumbull** - If a man is not ready to die, he is not ready to live. He who is unready to lay down his life at the call of duty, will not use his life to advantage while it is spared to him. It is a great mistake to suppose that it is a man's first duty to take care of his life, or to preserve his health, or to look out for his own interests, or to protect or support his family. His first duty is to do right. His second duty is to do right. His last duty is to do right. If the responsibility is upon him for the hour to risk his health, or his life, in behalf of his family, or of a stranger or of any trust committed to him, he ought to take the risk, and push ahead at any cost. Living is a good business for a man only when a man is as ready to die as to live. But it was "for the name of the Lord Jesus" that Paul was ready to be bound or to die. There is no true discipleship of Jesus which does not reach thus far. He who would not die for his Saviour does not live for his Saviour. Unless the disciple gives his Saviour the first place in his affections, his discipleship is only an empty name.

**Acts 21:14 And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"**

KJV Acts 21:14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

- **The will of the Lord be done** Genesis 43:14; 1 Sa 3:18; 2 Sa 15:25,26; 2 Kings 20:19; Mt 6:10; 26:39,42; Luke 11:2; 22:42

**ACQUIESCENCE TO  
GOD'S WILL**



Their response to Paul was a perfect description of [acquiescence](#) which means the reluctant acceptance of something without protest.

**And since he would not be persuaded** - Paul's resolve was clear and fixed.

**Persuaded** (3982) ([peitho](#)) means Paul could not be induced by words to accept their warnings. Literally, "he not being persuaded." That was all. Paul's will (*kardia*) was not broken, not even bent. (Robertson)

**Jack Arnold** writes that in regard to their remark about the will of the Lord "they were referring to the secret, sovereign will of God (See [Arnold's preceding note on secret will](#)). They were now ready to submit to God's secret will for Paul's life no matter what the personal loss to them. They commended their dear friend Paul to the secret will of God, confident that whatever might occur was right for Paul. "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Paul had already accepted the will of God for his life even if it meant death. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Suppose you have a son (or daughter) who says to you that he feels God's will for him is to be a missionary. The thought strikes you that you may be separated from your child and grandchildren for much of life. As a wise parent, you should seek to reason with your child about this matter, giving the pros and cons, but once that child has a fixed conviction that God wants him in the ministry, do not discourage the child but encourage him, for nothing can be more wonderful for that child than to be in the center of God's directive will. As a good parent, you should cheerfully and confidently commit the child to God whom he serves, remembering that the parting of Christians, perhaps for life, will be short. Soon, son or daughter and parents will be united in heaven and be with one another for all eternity. **(ILLUSTRATION)** A missionary was about to leave London for the continent of Africa to preach the gospel. His family and friends said to him, "Don't go there, you will die," to which he replied, "I have already died in Christ in London and now I am ready to die for Christ in Africa." ([Acts 21:1-14 The Will of God](#))

**Robertson** has a somewhat pithy comment - There is a quaint naivete in this confession by the friends of Paul. Since Paul would not let them have their way, they were willing for the Lord to have his way, acquiescence after failure to have theirs.

**We fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"** - **Silent** in regard to trying to persuade Paul, but now vocal for they were convinced it was God's will for Paul. In fact they are now so convinced that they make the statement as a [present imperative](#) which in this context is virtually like their prayer that God's will for Paul would continually be done. There is no vacillation now.

**Polhill** has an interesting comment that "It was much like Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. He too did not relish facing the human agony of the cross but nonetheless committed himself wholly to God's purpose for him—"not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42+). It is not without reason that many refer to this scene as **'Paul's Gethsemane.'**" (Ibid)

**Will** (2307) ([thelema](#) from *thelo* = to will with the **"-ma"** suffix indicating the result of the will = "a thing willed") generally speaks of the result of what one has decided. In its most basic form, **thelema** refers to a wish, a strong desire, and the willing of some event.

**We fell silent** (2270) ([hesuchazo](#) from *hesuchos* = quiet, still) means to be still, to hold one's peace or to be silent and refrain from saying anything (used this way in Lk 14:4) They terminated their attempts to persuade Paul.

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**Henry Trumbull** - Driven by an instinct which neither we nor they can comprehend, the swallows pass with the changing seasons from clime to clime. Over miles of weary plain, over lofty mountain walls, across leagues of sea, into lands unknown before, they follow with gladness and trust the Hand that guides them. We, too, have a journey to make into lands unknown to us: we, too, have a Hand to guide us in that long journey. Shame is it for us if we follow the leadings of that Hand with less of gladness and of trust than the unreasoning birds of heaven.

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**Biblical Illustrator** - When Richard Cameron, a noble Scotch martyr, had fallen mortally wounded on Airdsmoss, he said, "I am dying, happy — happy; and if I had a thousand lives, I would willingly lay them all down one after another for Christ. Oh! He is near me; I think I see Him! I am just coming, Lord Jesus." And he added, "Tell my parents not to weep, but continue steadfast in the faith, and not to fear a suffering lot for Christ."

A Hindoo woman applied to the Rev. Mr. Sutton (Baptist missionary) for Christian baptism. He set before her the sufferings which must necessarily follow a renunciation of her heathenish creed; but she replied, "I am willing to bear it all; I am ready to sacrifice all to my Lord. Surely, sir, I cannot endure anything in comparison to what He suffered for me."

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## Surrender

Read: Acts 21:1-14

When he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done.. —Acts 21:14

In the early 1940s, the president of Dallas Seminary, Lewis Sperry Chafer, gave a very brief banquet speech. Introduced after a long program, he announced his subject: "The Reasonableness Of Fully Surrendering Our Lives To God." Then, because of the lateness of the hour, he gave only the three points of his message.

Reason 1: God is all-wise and knows better than anyone else what is best for my life.

Reason 2: He is almighty and has the power to accomplish what is best for me.

Reason 3: God loves me more than anyone else does.

Chafer concluded, "Therefore the most logical thing I can do is surrender my life to God. What more can I say? What more need I say?"

The apostle Paul had the same conviction. He knew that prison and hardship awaited him in Jerusalem, but he also knew that God wanted him to go (Acts 20:22-23). Even his sorrowing friends wisely concluded, "The will of the Lord be done" (21:14). They knew that Paul was right.

No matter what happens, when we do God's will we're in the safest place in all the world. The Lord is all-wise, almighty, and all-loving. Doesn't it make sense to surrender your life to Him? By Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

All to Jesus I surrender,  
All to Him I freely give;  
I will ever love and trust Him,  
In His presence daily live.  
—Van de Venter

Surrender means victory when we surrender to God.

### Acts 21:15 After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem.

KJV Acts 21:15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

- **started on our way up to Jerusalem** Acts 18:22; 25:1,6,9
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Caesarea > Jerusalem  
Click to Enlarge

**After these days** - The days in Caesarea (**we were staying there for some days**) in which Agabus warned of danger in Jerusalem and his friends appealed to no avail for Paul not to go.

Notice the fact that Luke says **we got ready** - Although they had been told repeatedly that Paul would be beaten and arrested in Jerusalem, Paul's traveling companions continued to travel with him. They would not leave Paul in his moment of crisis. During times of suffering, true friends stick close to provide comfort and assistance (see Pr 17:17). (Nelson Study Bible)

**THOUGHT** - Do you know a believer who is being persecuted for his or her faith? Are you sticking closer than a brother or sister (Pr 18:24)?

**We got ready** (1980)(**episkeuazo** from **epi** = upon + **skeuazo** = to prepare from **skeuos** = a vessel) means to make preparations, get fitted out or equip as for a journey. Robertson adds it is an "old verb to furnish with things necessary, to pack up, saddle horses here Ramsay holds." Only used here in the NT. The Textus Receptus has [aposkeuazo](#) which literally means to divest oneself of baggage.

**Liddell-Scott** - to get ready, to equip, fit out, Thuc., Xen.:Med., to have a ship equipped, Thuc. 2. to pack them upon wagons, Xen. II. to make afresh, to repair, Lat. reficere, Thuc., Xen.

**And started on our way up to Jerusalem** - A journey of 69-65 miles south. As noted before, when one went to Jerusalem the direction was designated "up" because of its elevation. The [imperfect tense](#) indicates we started to go up (continually began starting to go up).

**Started on our way up** (305)([anabaino](#) from **ana** = upwards, up, as a pref. denotes up, again, back + **basis** = a foot) means to go up, to ascend, cause to ascend from a lower to a higher place. Used in phrase "it was not David who **ascended** to Heaven" (Acts 2:34) In a sense ascending the hill to Jerusalem something all believers will be able to do some day in the Millennium (cf Ps 24:3-4), for as the psalmist says of Jerusalem "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, Is Mount Zion in the far north, The city of the great King." (Ps 48:2, Mt 5:35b).

**Marshall** observes that "A certain parallelism between the careers of Jesus and Paul is to be seen. Jesus too journeyed to Jerusalem, and during his journey prophesied concerning his impending sufferings; he was arrested and tried, appearing before the Jews and the Romans." (TNTC - Acts)

**Acts 21:16 Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge.**

KJV Acts 21:16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

- **Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us** Acts 21:8; 10:24,48
- **taking us to Mnason of Cyprus** Acts 21:3; 11:19; 15:39
- **a disciple of long standing** Ps 71:17,18; 92:14; Proverbs 16:31; Ro 16:7; Philemon 1:9; 1 John 2:13,14
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Some of the disciples** ([mathetes](#)) **from Caesarea also came with us** - Recall that they were taking the collection from Macedonia and travel in those days was not safe, but a group of travelers would be far safer than just a few traveling along these dusty, bandit infested roadways.

**Taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing** - And being from Cyprus (like Barnabas) he may have been able to give Paul a report on the church in Cyprus. This is the only mention of this disciple. While it is only conjecture, one wonders Paul had contact with Mnason on the first missionary journey as Cyprus was the first stop for Paul and Barnabas (and Mark) (Acts 13:5-12+) about 10 years earlier.

**With whom we were to lodge** - The journey of 60-65 miles would have been too long to complete in one day, so presumably Mnason lived about halfway.

**Jack Arnold** has an interesting word about Mnason which the KJV calls "an old disciple" - He was a man still true to the Lord and had accepted growing old graciously. Apparently he had not grown inflexible and critical as so many do in their latter years, for he was willing to accept Paul who many of the Jews called a libertine and a destroyer of the Law. Apparently Mnason was not afraid of change for he knew Paul's theology was radical. This man had enough graciousness and flexibility to be in the center of the Christian movement even in his latter days. He was able to adjust and to be where the spiritual action was. For those of us who are growing older, let us pray that we can be flexible, make adjustments, be willing to change and identify with what God is doing today. Let us pray that God will keep us from a critical and cynical attitude about life. Even as we grow older we must seek the will of God for our lives. God has a great need for older people. Their wisdom, prayer, hospitality, encouragement and often their finances are needed in the body of Christ. At every age a person must seek the will of God, submit to the will of God and do the will of God. We must be careful that we are not like King Solomon whose devotion for the Lord waned in his older years. "For it came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been" (1 Kings 11:4). God used 1 Kings 11:4 in a mighty way in my own life some time ago. I was sitting in an apartment in Weisbaden, Germany reading my Bible. My eyes fell on this verse, and God spoke to me about my devotion to Christ as I had passed the forty mark. I found myself crying out, "Lord, don't let me grow cold to You as I grow old." Tears streaming down my face, I cried out, "Lord, let me have true devotion to you in my latter years, and don't let me be negative, bitter, critical and hard as I move on in years." ([Acts 21:15-26 The Will of God in Concession](#))

**Acts 21:17 After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.**

KJV Acts 21:17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

- **the brethren received us gladly** Acts 15:4; Ro 15:7; Heb 13:1,2; 3 John 1:7,8

- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THEY PUT OUT THE WELCOME MAT FOR PAUL

**After we arrived in Jerusalem the brethren received us gladly** - What a difference 20 years can make! Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion was not so peaceful for Luke records that "When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple." (Acts 9:26+) And even after being accepted by the believers, he was rejected by the Hellenistic Jews who "were attempting to put him to death." (Acts 9:29+) As the present scene unfolds, we see that even after 20 years, the Jews still desire Paul's death!

**Received** (588)([apodechomai](#) from **apo** = from or intensifier + [dechomai](#) = to receive or welcome) means to receive kindly or hospitably (Luke 8:40+; Acts 15:4+; Acts 18:27+); of God's Word, to receive or embrace heartily, put out the "welcome mat" for it ("those who had received his word" = Acts 2:41+); of benefits, to receive or accept gratefully (Acts 24:3+). **Robertson** says "Peculiar to Luke. To receive with pleasure." In the present passage this verb pictures them warmly welcoming Paul and his fellow travelers. The [middle voice](#) of **apodechomai** speaks of their personal involvement in the reception of the brethren.

**Apodechomai** - used only by Luke - Lk. 8:40; Lk. 9:11; Acts 2:41; Acts 18:27; Acts 21:17; Acts 24:3; Acts 28:30

**Gladly** (780)(**asmenos** from perfect participle of **hedomai** = to be pleased, to delight) is an adverb which means well-pleased, readily, gladly. Louw-Nida - pertaining to experiencing happiness, implying ready and willing acceptance. Only NT use.

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**Bob Utley** gives us a brief overview of coming attractions...

1. Riot and arrest at the Temple Acts 21:17–40
2. Paul's defense before the mob Acts 22:1–22
3. The Roman Interrogation Acts 22:23–30
4. The Sanhedrin Interrogation Acts 23:1–10
5. The conspiracy to murder Paul Acts 23:11–35
6. Paul before Felix Acts 23:1–23
7. Paul before Felix and Drusilla privately Acts 24:24–27
8. Paul before Festus Acts 25:1–12
9. Paul before Agrippa II and Bernice Acts 25:13–26:32

**Acts 21:18 And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.**

KJV Acts 21:18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

- **went in with us to James** Acts 15:13; Mt 10:2; Gal 1:19; 2:9; James 1:1
- **and all the elders were present.** Acts 15:2,6,23; 20:17
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JERUSALEM CHURCH ELDERS CONVENE

**And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present**- "**Us**" signifies Luke was with them. Clearly James is the chief elder in this formal reception of Paul. It is interesting that no apostles are mentioned as being present, given that both elders and apostles were present at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. The most natural explanation is that the apostles were away preaching the Gospel, carrying out Jesus' commission to be His witnesses to the "even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8+, e.g., tradition says [the apostle Thomas traveled as far as India](#)). Also note that this is not a meeting of the entire church which **Robertson** says is "probably because of the known prejudice against Paul created by the [Judaizers](#)." In the context of what comes to light in Acts 21:20-21 Robertson is probably correct.

This **James** is James the less, the half-brother of Christ.

**Elders** (4245)([presbuteros](#) the comparative form of **présbus** = an old man or an ambassador) referred to men who were older or more senior with no negative connotations but rather a sense of venerability. **Presbuteros** is transliterated into English as

“**presbyter**”, a leader in one of the Jewish communities--especially a member of the [Sanhedrin](#) or as in the present passage of the early Christian church.

#### Related Resource:

- [Who was James, the brother of Jesus, in the Bible?](#)

**Acts 21:19 After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.**

KJV Acts 21:19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

- **he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles** Acts 11:4-18; 14:27; 15:4,12; Ro 15:18,19; 1 Cor 3:5-9; 15:10; 2 Cor 6:1; Col 1:29
- **through his ministry** Acts 1:17; 20:24; 2 Cor 12:12
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### A HEARTY GREETING A HEARTENING REPORT

Paul presents a perfect pattern for all saints to emulate - when we experience "success" of any sort in ministry, we should talk not about what we did but about what God has accomplished. It's an easy trap to fall into because the middle letter of pride is "I"!

Note that Paul's humble attribution of the glory to God was his usual pattern

Acts 14:27 When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

Acts 15:4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

Acts 15:12 All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Paul saw himself as an instrument in the hands of God or like a "conduit" through whom God's Spirit rushed like a might rushing river...

For I will not presume to speak of anything except what **Christ has accomplished through me**, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, (Ro 15:18<sup>+</sup>)

In the letter to the saints at Corinth Paul explained his "success" (which is the key to our "success")...

For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. (1 Cor 15:9<sup>+</sup> 1 Cor 15:10<sup>+</sup>)

Finally in 2 Cor 10:17 Paul wrote "HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD."

**After he had greeted them** - Greeted is [aspazomai](#) which means to enfold in one's arms, to welcome or to embrace. In classical literature **aspazomai** was used of physical expressions of welcome, such as "embracing" and bestowing a friendly "kiss."

### REVIEWING WHAT GOD HATH WROUGHT

**He began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles**- **Relate** is in the [imperfect tense](#) which pictures Paul describing the triumph of the Gospel in one city and then moving on to the next city -- see the lengthy "[Itinerary](#)" which Paul may have used to "**relate one by one**." indicating that Paul recount his spiritual journeys, this word picturing Paul as narrating this is detail explaining what God had done, an exercise we would all do well to emulate, for we all need to hear and be encouraged about what God is doing supernaturally in our strongly anti-supernaturalistic world! (Compare Peter's presentation in Jerusalem -

Acts 11:4+). Of course some of the most dramatic evidence would have been the Gentile believers who had accompanied Paul to Jerusalem. Changed lives are always the best evidence of the supernatural activity of God! In addition, at this time (Luke never specifically tells us) Paul may have given the elders the contribution from Macedonia and other churches (cf 1 Cor 16:1) which would have also been clear evidence of God at work among the Gentiles. As John later wrote "whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 Jn 3:17+). The Gentile believers were clearly giving evidence that the love of God was abiding with them!

**THOUGHT - Through his ministry** - I have to confess I am not big on tattoos but this is a phrase that if possible I would like to have tattooed across my heart as a constant reminder that anything and everything of eternal value in ministry is the result of His ministry to and through us. This is the essence of Jesus' words in John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do **nothing**." And also in John 6:63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits **nothing**; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." Notice that in both of those clear declarations from the lips of our Lord Jesus, there is a key word - **NOTHING**.

**John Phillips** used his sanctified imagination in declaring, "Paul began, surely, with his first visit to Galatia and told the thrilling story of his three missionary journeys. The names rolled off his tongue like a roll call of the nations—Salamis, Paphos, Perga, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Illyricum, and not just places, but people. Thousands upon thousands of people saved by faith, washed in the blood of the Lamb, baptized by the Holy Spirit into the church of Christ. And not only places and people, but pithy anecdotes—stories of prison and persecution, stories of Mars' Hill, and stories of miracles and magicians and of mighty movements of the Spirit. Never had these Jerusalem Christians, with their narrow, parochial interests, heard the like." (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts)

**Began to relate** (1834) (**exegeomai** from **ek** = out or as an intensifier + **hegeomai** = tell, lead means literally to lead out, then to unfold, declare by making plain, or tell the meaning of something, especially to tell it fully. To make known or thoroughly explain. Figuratively the idea is to "bring out" the meaning. To "draw out" in narrative form and so to relate (Luke 24:35; Acts 10:8; 15:12, 14; 21:19). In English **relate** means to give an account of. **Exegeomai** means to "lead completely out" which means more than simple "telling" for it also unfolds something to reach a proper understanding, e.g., the "leading out" (expounding) of the facts proceeds to its necessary objective.

**Acts 21:20 And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law;**

KJV Acts 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

- **they began glorifying God** Acts 4:21; 11:18; Ps 22:23,27; 72:17-19; 98:1-3; Isaiah 55:10-13; 66:9-14; Luke 15:3-10,32; Ro 15:6,7,9-13; Gal 1:24; 2 Th 1:10; Rev 19:6,7
- **how** Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7; Mt 13:31-33; John 12:24
- **many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed** Luke 12:1; \*Gr:
- **and they are all zealous for the Law** Acts 15:1,5,24; 22:3; Ro 10:2; Gal 1:14
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **PRAISING GOD FOR THE NEW CONVERTS**

**And when they heard it they began glorifying God** - Note not Paul, but God. They had a proper understanding of all ministry that is truly supernatural. By definitions (i.e., "supernatural"), it has to have a supernatural Source, God Himself. **Began glorifying** is in the [imperfect tense](#) indicating there was ongoing praise, God being glorified by one, then another and another - what a wonderful time of worship.

**THOUGHT** - The response of the Jerusalem elders is another perfect pattern to practice - when others experience spiritual fruit in their ministry, we are not to become jealous or envious, but instead should give all the glory to God (Read a similar thought on jealousy in 1 Cor 3:3-11). You can't be jealous and give God glory! That's a divided heart. Jealousy is sin and sin quenches the Spirit Who enables us to give glory to God from a whole heart. This recalls Paul's instruction to the gifted but a bit jaded Corinthian church declaring that "if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Cor 12:26) This begs the question - How do you handle



the spiritual success of other saints?

**Began glorifying** (1392)(**doxazo** from **doxa** = glory) literally means to properly, ascribe *weight* by recognizing real *substance* (*value*). In this context glorifying God meant they were in essence valuing Him for Who He really is. As they were ascribing glory to God they were personally acknowledging God in His true character or essence. We need to keep in mind the truth that no one actually gives glory to God, because He alone possesses glory! However, in this magnanimous character He graciously condescends to share His glory. Thus we really only give back to Him what He gives to us. As A. W. Tozer said "God gives, but doesn't give away!"

**MacArthur** - As when Peter reported the salvation of Cornelius's household (11:18), Paul's report produced rejoicing. (The salvation of sinners has the same effect in heaven, as Luke 15:7, 10, 32 indicate.) By glorifying God, the elders acknowledged that salvation is His work, not man's. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed-** That many thousands of Jews had believed was certainly good news to Paul. While we can only give estimates, commentators say that at this time there were as many as 20-50,000 believing Jews in Jerusalem (e.g., see Acts 2:41+ and Acts 4:4+)

**You see** (observe) (2334)(**theoreo** from **theaomai** = to look at closely or attentively or contemplatively - even with a sense of wonder; cp **theoros** = a spectator) usually refers to physical sight but can also refer to perception and understanding. The elders are pointing out to Paul what he obviously had observed or perceived and that was that was the fact that the Jews who had believed were zealous for the Law of Moses.

**Who have believed** (4100)(**pisteuo**) means these Jews had considered the teachings about Jesus, been convicted by the His Spirit and thus been persuaded that He was the Messiah and was worthy of their trust. Believed is in the **perfect tense** which indicates that they professed belief at a point in time and that this profession had endured (i.e., they were true believers in Jesus).

**And they are all zealous for the Law** - Note that **the Law = the Law** of Moses. So after the "good news" that **thousands of Jews** had **believed**, now they begin to warn Paul about the Jews who were **zealous for the Law**. Notice the little adjective "all" indicating that zeal for the Law was pervasive among the believing Jews. So while they were apparently genuine believers, they were still clinging to many of their practices they had learned since childhood. What would you do if you had been raised all your life in a strictly orthodox belief system? Is it likely you would immediately forsake everything you had been taught? Of course not. So that this was the case should not be unexpected nor looked upon with arrogant contempt. For example, Luke records in Acts 3 that even **"Peter and John** were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer." (Acts 3:1+). In other words, after coming to faith in Messiah, these life-long Jews did not abruptly cease living like Jews. And remember that the Temple was still standing and would not be destroyed until 70 A.D. about 14 years later.

**MacArthur** adds "God Himself was tolerant (OF THE BELIEVING JEWS CONTINUING TO PRACTICE JEWISH FEASTS, ETC) during this period of transition, knowing how difficult it was for the Jewish Christians to break with their past. He also knew that in a few years this would no longer be a dominant issue in the church. After the Jewish revolt against Rome (a.d. 66-70), which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem, the influence of the Jerusalem church waned. Christianity gradually became a predominantly Gentile faith, and other churches (such as Antioch and Alexandria) ascended to the forefront....This large group of **zealous** Jewish believers provided **fertile soil for false teachers**—Paul's old nemeses the Judaizers (**Who were the Judaizers?**). These bitter enemies of the gospel of grace had dogged Paul's footsteps throughout his missionary journeys. In fact, he wrote Galatians largely to counter their dangerous false teachings. They denied that salvation is by grace through faith alone, insisting that keeping the Mosaic law was required for salvation (cf. Acts 15:1). The Jerusalem Council explicitly rejected their heretical teachings. (Ibid)

**Warren Wiersbe** asks "why were so many believing Jews still clinging to the Law of Moses? Had they not read Romans and Galatians? Probably not, and even if they had, old customs are difficult to change. In fact, one day God would have to send a special letter to the Jews, the Epistle to the Hebrews, to explain the relationship between the Old and New Covenants. As Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse used to say, "The Book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrews to tell them to stop being Hebrews!" It was not until the city and the temple were destroyed in a.d. 70 that traditional Jewish worship ceased. Paul did warn the Gentiles not to get involved in the old Jewish religion (Gal. 4:1-11); but he nowhere told the Jews that it was wrong for them to practice their customs, *so long as they did not trust in ceremony or make their customs a test of fellowship* (Rom. 14:1-15:7). There was freedom to observe special days and diets, and believers were not to judge or condemn one another. **The same grace that gave the Gentiles freedom to abstain also gave the Jews freedom to observe.** All God asked was that they receive one another and not create problems or divisions. (Bible Exposition Commentary).

**Zealous** (2207)(**zelotes** from **zeo** = to boil, be hot or glow) is a noun which here describes these believing Jews as fervently, enthusiastically devoted to the Law. Since **zelotes** is a noun, it should more accurately be translated as **"zealots"** (those who were

zealous, an adjective) They were earnestly committed to their Jewish traditions. Paul uses this same word to describe himself in Acts 22:3+ declaring "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being **zealous** for God **just as you all are** today."

**A T Robertson** explains that "It (THE ISSUE OF THE GENTILE'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW OF MOSES) was settled at the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15; Galatians 2) that the Mosaic ceremonial law was not to be imposed upon Gentile Christians. Paul won freedom for them, but it was not said that it was wrong for Jewish Christians to go on observing it if they wished. We have seen Paul observing the passover in Philippi (Acts 20:6+ Unleavened Bread ~ Passover) and planning to reach Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 20:16+). The Judaizers rankled under Paul's victory and power in spreading the gospel among the Gentiles and gave him great trouble in Galatia and Corinth. They were busy against him in Jerusalem also and it was to undo the harm done by them in Jerusalem that Paul gathered the great collection from the Gentile Christians and brought it with him and the delegates from the churches. Clearly then Paul had real ground for his apprehension of trouble in Jerusalem while still in Corinth (Romans 15:25+) when he asked for the prayers of the Roman Christians (Acts 21:30-32+). The repeated warnings along the way were amply justified. ([Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Jack Arnold** - This is a section of Scripture which just baffles the minds of Gentile Christians. It appears in this passage that Paul went back under the Mosaic Law for sanctification, and he does this with such ease that it seems as though deliverance from the Mosaic Law, for justification and sanctification, is irrelevant. However, this is only as it appears on the surface. Paul had a definite reason for going back under the Mosaic Law. This section of Scripture should help us as Christians to understand why there are some Christians who believe that Christians are still under most, or at least some, aspects of the Mosaic Law, and others who believe that Christians are under no aspects of the Mosaic Law. Some Christians believe we are Saturday Sabbath keepers, others think we are Sunday Sabbath keepers and others think the Sabbath is not for today but Christians are Lord's Day keepers. Hopefully, this message will help us in our attitudes towards Christians who do not agree over the extent of Christian obligation to the Mosaic Law. Paul is on the last lap of his third missionary journey and has moved out in obedience to go to Jerusalem. Friends and prophets, even Dr. Luke, tried to persuade Paul not to go to Jerusalem because there he would face suffering and imprisonment. Yet Paul would not budge for he knew this was the will of God for his life. He went ready to accept whatever God had for him in that great city of the Jews. ([Acts 21:15-26 The Will of God in Concession](#))

**Acts 21:21 and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.**

KJV Acts 21:21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

- **that you are teaching all the Jews** Acts 6:13,14; 16:3; 28:17; Ro 14:1-6; 1 Cor 9:19-21; Gal 5:1-6; 6:12-15
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **FALSE REPORTS ABOUT PAUL WERE IN THE AIR**

If something is **in the air**, you feel that it is happening or about to happen.

**And they have been told about** (peri - concerning) **you** - Told is the first word in the Greek sentence for emphasis. The elders continue to explain the implication of thousands of believing Jews zealous for the Law, now stating they have had reports about Paul. The question is "**Who told them?**" Clearly these are Jews who still hold to the false belief that by keeping the Law they can merit righteousness before God, i.e., [Judaizers](#). The evil, misguided men detested anything that [smacked](#) of grace, for [legalism](#) and grace are [diametrically](#), eternally opposed! They do not mix! As an aside, this is the reason Christians need to be so careful about falling into the often very subtle trap of [legalism](#) - e.g., doing things like keeping little list of things they should or should not do to merit favor with God. Remember that "favor with God" is a definition of grace, and as such is totally unmerited but only gratefully received.

**They have been told** (2727) ([katecheo](#) from *katá* = down or intensive + *echeo* = sound, our English "echo"; English - [catechism](#)) (related word [sounded forth](#) = [execheo](#)) means literally to sound down on or into the ears. From this the derived meaning is "to inform" or "to instruct orally." The idea is to re-sound, to re-echo, to teach by by insistent repetition into the ears as the Arabs do when learning the Koran (learning aloud). In this case it was legalistic Jews who were **insistently repeating** the lies and [falsehoods](#) about Paul. This verb paints the picture that these malicious adversaries of Paul were repeating a detailed false report!

**MacArthur** helps us understand the dynamic at play which made the false accusations would have had considerable potential to cause trouble among the believing Jews - The charges against Paul were unsettling for the Jerusalem church, since they dealt with issues that went to the heart of what set the Jews apart as God's people. Further, this was "*a time of intense Jewish nationalism and political unrest. One insurrection after another rose to challenge the Roman overlords, and Felix brutally suppressed them all. This only increased the Jewish hatred for Rome and inflamed anti-Gentile sentiments. It was a time when pro-Jewish sentiment was at its height, and friendliness with outsiders was viewed askance.*" (Polhill, New American Commentary) Thus, the allegations against Paul posed a serious threat to the Jerusalem church's efforts to evangelize unbelieving Jews. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**That you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake**(commit apostasy from) **Moses - Forsake Moses = Forsake the Law of Moses.** The phrase **Jews who are among the Gentiles** refers primarily to the Jews outside of Palestine who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire (Jews of the [Diaspora](#), cf Acts 2:9+). In particular this would be [those Gentile regions](#) where Paul had ministered during his first 3 missionary journeys.

**Furneaux** suggests that ""In the eyes of the church at Jerusalem this was a far more serious matter than the previous question at the Conference about the status of Gentile converts." ([Acts 21 Commentary](#))

This would represent either misunderstanding of what Paul was teaching or overt lies and falsehoods about what he was teaching. The fact that these believing Jews **have been told about you** would support the idea that [Judaizers](#) (or men of their ilk) were going around spreading lies about Paul in order to malign His Name, his Gospel and his Lord and thereby disrupt the spread of the Gospel among the Jews. Satan is a liar and a deceiver and his fingerprints are all over these statements about Paul which were being propagated among the believing Jews.

Did Paul speak about the **Law of Moses**? Of course he did, but not to denigrate it. In Romans we see Paul's positive assessment of the Law

So then, the **Law** is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. (Ro 7:12+)

For we know that the **Law** is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. (Ro 7:14+)

Paul's opponents had purposely misquoted him regarding his teaching about the Law. Paul had made it crystal clear in his teaching that " by the works of (BY TRYING TO KEEP IT IN AN ATTEMPT TO MERIT GOD'S FAVOR AND BLESSING) the **Law** (absolutely) no flesh will be justified (DECLARED IN RIGHT STANDING) in His sight; (THEN PAUL EXPLAINED THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW) for through the **Law** comes the knowledge of sin." (Ro 3:20+) And then he added his own personal example declaring "I would not have known about coveting if the **Law** had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." (Ro 7:7+). This is the essence of what Paul taught about the Law. But lies were being spread that he had told the Jews to totally abandon the Law.

At the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 Peter had refuted the false teaching that Gentiles needed to obey the Law of Moses (as advocated by some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed - read Acts 15:5+) asking those who advocated keeping the Law

"Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke (KEEPING THE LAW OF MOSES) which neither our fathers nor we (JEWS) have been able to bear? (THAT IS THAT THEY MUST OBSERVE THE LAW OF MOSES) 11 "But we believe that **we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus**, in the same way as they also are." (Acts 15:10-11+)

And even though keeping the Law had been refuted (and accepted by the Jerusalem council) now it re-surfaces as an allegation that Paul was against the **Law of Moses**. Even as the council had not said they were against the **Law of Moses**, but what they did affirm was the pristine presentation of Peter that both Jews and Gentiles were saved the same way "through the grace of the Lord Jesus." But now these Jewish opponents pervert and twist Paul's teaching which is actually the very truth that had been accepted by the Jerusalem council. Whether some of his opponents had attended the Jerusalem council is not stated, but if they had, they had a case of selective memory loss.

**Robertson** writes that the elders of the Jerusalem church "do not believe this false charge, but they wish Paul to set it straight."

**Teaching** ([present tense](#) - continually)([1321](#))([didasko](#)) meaning that Paul was continually instructing the believing Jews with his goal being to shape their will so that they would forsake the Law and their customs.

**Forsake** (apostasize)([646](#))(**apostasia** from **aphistemi** = depart derived from **apo** = separation + **histemi** = to stand) is a noun which literally describes a "stand off" (or "a standing off") and thus is a departure, a defection or falling away. In English [apostasy](#) means the abandonment or renunciation of a religious or political belief. These evil men were accusing Paul of teaching the believing Jews to in essence "apostasize" from Judaism. That was a patent lie. He was telling them to "forsake" the false teaching that one could attain righteous standing before a holy God by keeping the Law! So in fact, the very ones accusing Paul were themselves guilty of

false teaching. Though Paul was not referring necessarily to these Jewish false teachers the picture he paints in his Second Letter to the Corinthians is certainly applicable - "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness (AN APT DESCRIPTION OF THESE JEWISH FALSE TEACHERS), whose end will be according to their deeds." (2 Cor 11:13-15)

#### Related Resource:

- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Apostasy and Apostates from Judaism](#)

**Telling them not to circumcise their children** - Paul never taught the Jews not to circumcise their children. Clearly this was a lie for Luke had earlier recorded that "Paul wanted this man (TIMOTHY) to go with him; and he took him and **circumcised** him (WHY) because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek." (Acts 16:3+) And so even back in Acts 16 Paul recognized that Timothy (half Jewish) would be a stumbling block to the Jews they would be ministering to if he was not circumcised. In circumcising Timothy Paul was in effect illustrating what he declared in his letter to the saints at Corinth...

For though I am free ([eleutheros](#)) from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that [PURPOSE CLAUSE](#) I may win more. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew (e.g., CIRCUMCISING TIMOTHY, CELEBRATING PENTECOST), so that ([PURPOSE CLAUSE](#)) I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law (IN OTHER WORDS HE DID NOT PRACTICE KEEPING THE LAW TO PLEASE GOD OR MERIT HIS FAVOR), so that ([PURPOSE CLAUSE](#)) I might win ([kerdaino](#)) those who are under (SUBJECTING THEMSELVES TO, KEEPING LEGALISTICALLY) the Law; 21 to those who are without law (GENTILES), as without law, though not being without the law of God (IN OTHER WORDS NOT "LAWLESS" OR LICENTIOUS) but under the law of Christ (ESPECIALLY TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER - Jn 13:34, cf Gal 6:2), so that ([PURPOSE CLAUSE](#)) I might win ([kerdaino](#)) - gain as converts - not "notches on his belt" but to the glory of God) those who are without law. (1 Cor 9:19-21)

**Robertson** - The They were accusing Paul of saying that the Jewish believers are not to go on circumcising their children, but as we learn elsewhere taught the exact opposite

Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised. (1 Cor. 7:18)

**Circumcise** (4059) ([peritemno](#) from **perí** = around + **témno** = cut off - see study of [peritome](#)) means literally to cut something off or away ("to cut off around"), signifying a removal of that which has been cut away.

**Peritemno** - 15x - circumcise(4), circumcised(10), circumcision(1), receive circumcision(1), receives circumcision(1).

Lk. 1:59; Lk. 2:21; Jn. 7:22; Acts 7:8; Acts 15:1; Acts 15:5; Acts 16:3; Acts 21:21; 1 Co. 7:18; Gal. 2:3; Gal. 5:2; Gal. 5:3; Gal. 6:12; Gal. 6:13; Col. 2:11

**Nor to walk** ([peripateo](#)) **according to the customs** - **To walk** = To live, to conduct one's life in such a manner. Likewise Paul never taught them to abandon all Jewish customs. Paul's desire to celebrate the Pentecost is a crystal clear example from his own life that he had not encouraged believing Jews to abandon their Jewish customs. It was a blatant lie by his Jewish (non-believing) adversaries who wanted to damage his testimony and denigrate his teaching of the gospel of grace. So by adding this detail (the customs) the adversaries are seeking to cover everything and leave no doubt that Paul was an enemy of Jewish life and customs.

**MacArthur** comments on how ill founded were the charges against Paul - "If Paul really opposed circumcision, why did he circumcise Timothy (Acts 16:1-3+)? And if he taught others not to observe the Jewish customs, why did he take a Nazirite vow (Acts 18:18+)? Further, the Judaizers' lies about Paul were contradictory. In Galatia, they falsely accused him of advocating circumcision (Gal. 5:11); here in Jerusalem they falsely accused him of abrogating it. Like all inveterate liars, they said whatever was expedient at the moment. It is hardly surprising that the children of the father of lies resort to lies (John 8:44). Lies are one of the main ways Satan attacks the work of God. Believers should be slow to accept accusations against other Christians (particularly leaders, 1 Ti 5:19), especially when such charges originate with opponents of the Christian faith." (Ibid)

**Customs** (1485) ([ethos](#) from **etho** = to be used, to be accustomed) refers to a usual or customary manner of behavior, habit, pattern of behavior which is more or less fixed by tradition or the usual practice. It may be established by law or otherwise generally sanctioned by the society. What is interesting and possibly represents a "bitter irony" (or reaping of what one sows) is the fact that the **same charge was made against Stephen** (and some think Paul was one of the Jews making those accusations against Stephen) Luke recording "we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the **customs** ([ethos](#)) which Moses handed down to us." (Acts 6:14+, and compare Acts 6:11+)

**Ethos** -12x in NT - Lk. 1:9; Lk. 2:42; Lk. 22:39; Jn. 19:40; Acts 6:14; Acts 15:1; Acts 16:21; Acts 21:21; Acts 25:16; Acts 26:3; Acts 28:17; Heb. 10:25

**MacArthur** asks "Why were they still clinging to the customs and rituals of the Old Covenant? First, because those customs and rituals had been established by God. Coming to faith in Jesus Christ enhanced these Jewish believer's love for God and desire to obey Him and thus may have motivated a greater zeal for the old ceremonies. Second, the apostles and other leaders in the Jerusalem church did not oppose the continuation of these practices. Nowhere in the New Testament are Jewish believers condemned for observing them. In fact, Paul commands tolerance for such 'weaker brothers' until they grow to understand their freedom and can use it with clear consciences. The Jerusalem Council, while forbidding the imposition of Old Covenant rituals on Gentiles, did not prohibit Jewish believers from continuing to observe them. God Himself was tolerant during this period of transition, knowing how difficult it was for the Jewish Christians to break with their past. (Ibid)

**Matthew Henry** on the tendency of the early believers to stick close to their Jewish roots (I think he is a bit harsh) "This was a great weakness and mistake to be so fond of the shadows when the substance had come, to keep their necks under a yoke of bondage when Christ had come to make them free."

**B. H. Carroll** said, "The substance was in Christ, and when the substance came, it was foolishness to go back and take up the weak and beggarly elements of the world."

I'm not sure that **R Kent Hughes** is correct when he comments on these believing Jews still going to the Temple, etc -- "They were saying in effect, 'We are saved by grace, but we are kept saved by the Law.'" Remember even stalwarts like Peter and John continued to go to the Temple (Acts 3:1). And Paul had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3).

There is a modern movement in America (circa 2018-19) that is not an innocent holding on to traditions like these first century Jewish believers were doing. It is known as the [Hebrew Roots movement](#). And while it is beyond the scope to the current comments on Acts, the reader should at least be aware of its existences and its negative influence of Christianity. Here is a short introduction on this dangerous movement...

What does the Hebrew Roots Movement believe? Essentially, their goal is to restore the Jewishness of Christianity. Those in the Hebrew Roots Movement argue that Christianity has strayed way too far from its Jewish roots. There is definitely some truth to this argument. For instance, western Christianity has no problem observing holidays the Bible does not mention, but virtually ignores the Jewish holidays the Bible does mention. But, the Hebrew Roots Movement is not just about the Jewish holidays. The ultimate goal of many in the Hebrew Roots Movement is to put Christians under the bondage of the Old Covenant law, with strict adherence to all of the commands, other than the sacrificial system. (see full article [The Haters: The Hebrew Roots Movement](#))

**Acts 21:22 "What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.**

KJV Acts 21:22 What is it therefore? **the multitude must needs come together:** for they will hear that thou art come.

- **the multitude must needs come together** Acts 15:12,22; 19:32 - This phrase is not in the NAS, only the Textus Receptus
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **PAUL'S PRESENCE: A POTENTIAL "POWDER KEG!"**

A [powder keg](#) "is a barrel of gunpowder....A powder keg is also a metaphorical term for a region that political, socioeconomic, historical or other circumstances have made prone to outbursts. The analogy is drawn from a perception that certain territories may seem peaceful and dormant until another event triggers a large outburst of violence. The term is used to simplify and help the understanding of what is often a complex set of circumstances that lead to conflicts, such as the powder keg of Europe," and in this case the religious "powder keg" about to explode in Jerusalem!

**What, then, is to be done?** - Although the elders of the Jerusalem church don't believe the charges against Paul, they continue to express their concern and feel the need to do something to avert a crisis.

**They will certainly hear that you have come** - The believing Jews who were zealots regarding the Law would by all mean hear of



Paul's presence. Paul's visit to Jerusalem could hardly be kept a secret. They saw this situation of Paul's presence in Jerusalem as a potential "powder keg."

Acts 21:23 "Therefore **do** this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow;

KJV Acts 21:23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

- **We have four men who are under a vow** Acts 18:18; Numbers 6:2-7
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### A SUGGESTED COMPROMISE TO EASE THE TENSION

**Therefore** - [term of conclusion](#). We have a potential problem. Here is our conclusion.

**Do** ([aorist imperative](#) - Do not delay!) **this that we tell you** - And so the elders propose a solution that theoretically might defuse a potentially volatile situation.

**Warren Wiersbe** - He agreed to **do** it. If it had been a matter involving somebody's personal salvation, you can be sure that Paul would never have cooperated; for that would have compromised his message of salvation by grace, through faith. But this was a matter of personal conviction on the part of Jewish believers who were given the freedom to accept or reject the customs. (Bible Exposition Commentary).

**Jack Arnold** has an interesting comment - The leaders, fearing a division, accepted the philosophy of peace at any price. We will find out that the taking of the vow did not appease the critics for they were in sin for judging Paul, listening to hearsay and having a critical spirit. Critical people must deal with their sinful attitudes before God. Until they repent, they will never be appeased. ([Sermon](#))

**J Vernon McGee** - A Jew who comes to Jesus Christ does not stop being a Jew. So they say to Paul, "Look, you are a Jew. That is your background. And you want to win the Jews for Christ." Paul says, "I sure do!" So they say, "Since you are a Jew, it wouldn't hurt you to go with these four Jewish men who have made a vow. They have shaved their heads and are going into the temple. Would you go along with them?" Paul says, "Sure." Paul didn't take this vow because he was commanded to do so (**Ed**: Actually they did issue a command [**Do**], but I think they gave it under grace, not law). He took this vow because he wanted to win these people. (Thru the Bible)

**We have four men who are under a vow** - These men had already voluntarily taken this vow and were still under the vow. The Jerusalem elders are referring to a [Nazarite vow](#) (as supported by the reference to shaved heads - see Nu 6:18), which was a vow symbolism complete separation from the world and unto God, usually for a period of 30 days (Which is why some do not think this was truly a Nazarite vow). Samson (Jdg 16:17) and John the Baptist (Lk 1:15) were exceptions for they were to keep this vow for their entire life. You can see the logic of the elders, for they knew that among even the zealous Jews, the taking of a Nazarite vow was viewed with reverence for it was a manifestation of an individual's highest devotion to God.

If this was indeed a Nazarite vow, it was a good move, because shaven heads of five Jewish men would have testified visually of their loyalty to the Law of Moses.

**Gilbrant** comments the suggestion of the elders was that Paul take this vow "To demonstrate that he did not want to abolish Judaism. Paul was asked to pay for the sacrifices these four men were to present on the last day of the vow. This was in accordance with the Law (Nu 6:21) and contemporary practice, as when Herod Agrippa I paid for the expense of many Nazarites (Josephus Antiquities 19.6.1)." (Ibid)

**Vow** (2171) (**euche** from [euchomai](#) = to wish, pray, vow) usually refers to a vow but also could refer to a prayer. Louw-Nida on vow - promise to God that one will do something, with the implication that failure to act accordingly will result in divine sanctions against the person in question." Paul cut his hair at Cenchræe due to a vow he had taken (Acts 18:18) and many believe this was a modified Nazarite vow.

**Zodhiates** on the uses of **euche** in James 5:15 - If, however, prayer was meant by the *euché* (James 5:15), the more common word **proseuché** <4335> would have been used. The basic meaning of the word **euché** is wish or vow. When it is addressed to God, it becomes *proseuché*, from **prós** <4314>, toward, and **euché**, wish. When we pray to God, we **wish** that He would intervene to permit something in our lives that we feel is proper and right. For the Christian, **every prayer ought to be the result of his faith in God**



**through Christ.** In the NT, faith is the acceptance of God's revelation for man and the means whereby that revelation for each individual is appropriated. A Christian's wish is for God's will to take place in his life, even in the case of sickness. It is of such a wish coming from faith that James is speaking about in regard to a sick brother. In praying for the sick, we must exercise faith that God is able to heal, and we are free to express our wish for the healing of the sick. However, once we have expressed our wish, we must allow God to do as He pleases and in that find the satisfaction in faith. (Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament)

**Euche** - 3x - prayer (1), vow (2) - Acts 18:18; Acts 21:23; Jas. 5:15 ("the **prayer** offered in faith will restore the one who is sick")

**Gilbrant** - The Septuagint frequently uses **euchē** in place of *nēdher* and *nēzer*. Most often *euchē* means a “**vow**” (Numbers 30:3). It can also signify a specific kind of offering (Deut 12:6,11). In the Old Testament a vow was taken upon oneself voluntarily (Deuteronomy 23:21-23) and implied that something would be delivered to God at a specific point in time. A variety of items could serve as a “vow,” including a life of service rendered by the one who made the vow (Leviticus 27:2ff.). In Numbers 21:1-3 an entire city was placed under a ban as the result of a “vow” the Israelites took in order to help secure a military victory. One special use of *euchē* deserves closer examination. Nu 6:1-21 is devoted to a discussion of the Nazirite vow. This **euchē** was voluntary and open to both men and women. It covered a limited period of time. It involved such a consecrated dedication to God that the vow called for rigorous steps to ensure purity. Not only did the Nazirite abstain from wine and strong drink, he also abstained from all fruit of the vine (i.e., grapes, raisins). In addition, the Nazirite was to grow his hair long and wear it unbound as a symbol of strength in honor of the Lord. Also he was to have no association with the dead. Special purification rites were prescribed in the extraordinary event of contact with the dead (Nu 6:9-12). On the final day of the vow, certain sacrifices were offered including the hair cut from the consecrated head. The significance of the vow was a demonstration of one's dedication to God. (Ibid)

**Euche** in the **Septuagint** -

Gen. 28:20; Gen. 31:13; Lev. 7:16; Lev. 22:21; Lev. 22:23; Lev. 22:29; Lev. 23:38; Lev. 27:2; Num. 6:2; Num. 6:4; Num. 6:5; Num. 6:6; Num. 6:7; Num. 6:8; Num. 6:9; Num. 6:12; Num. 6:13; Num. 6:18; Num. 6:19; Num. 6:21; Num. 15:3; Num. 15:8; Num. 21:2; Num. 29:39; Num. 30:2; Num. 30:3; Num. 30:4; Num. 30:5; Num. 30:6; Num. 30:7; Num. 30:8; Num. 30:9; Num. 30:10; Num. 30:11; Num. 30:12; Num. 30:13; Num. 30:14; Deut. 12:6; Deut. 12:17; Deut. 12:26; Deut. 23:18; Deut. 23:21; Jdg. 11:30; Jdg. 11:39; 1 Sam. 1:11; 1 Sam. 1:21; 1 Sam. 2:9; 2 Sam. 15:7; 2 Sam. 15:8; Job 11:17; Job 16:17; Job 22:27; Ps. 22:25; Ps. 50:14; Ps. 56:12; Ps. 61:5; Ps. 61:8; Ps. 65:1; Ps. 66:13; Ps. 116:18; Prov. 7:14; Prov. 15:8; Prov. 15:29; Prov. 19:13; Prov. 31:2; Eccl. 5:4; Isa. 19:21; Jer. 11:15; Dan. 6:5; Dan. 6:7; Dan. 6:12; Jon. 1:16; Nah. 1:15; Mal. 1:14

#### **Related Resources:**

- [What is the Nazirite/Nazarite vow?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about shaving?](#)
- [What happened between Paul's third and fourth missionary journeys?](#)

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**Gotquestions summary of a Nazirite Vow** - The Nazirite/Nazarite vow is taken by individuals who have voluntarily dedicated themselves to God. The vow is a decision, action, and desire on the part of people whose desire is to yield themselves to God completely. By definition, the Hebrew word *nazir*, simply means “to be separated or consecrated.” The Nazirite vow, which appears in Numbers 6:1-21, has five features. It is voluntary, can be done by either men or women, has a specific time frame, has specific requirements and restrictions, and at its conclusion a sacrifice is offered.

**First, the individual enters into this vow voluntarily.** The Bible says, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of separation to the LORD as a Nazirite’” (Numbers 6:2). This shows that it is individuals who take the initiative to consecrate themselves to the Lord. There is no divine command involved. While generally done by the individual by his own choice, two individuals in the Old Testament, and one in the New Testament, were presented to God by their parents. Samuel and Samson in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 2:8-28; Judges 13:1-5), and John the Baptist in the New Testament received the Nazirite vow from birth (Luke 1:13-17).

**Second, both men and women could participate in this vow,** as Numbers 6:2 indicates, “a man or woman.” The Nazirite vow was often taken by men and women alike purely for personal reasons, such as thanksgiving for recovery from illness or for the birth of a child. However, under the Mosaic law, the vow or oath of a single woman could be rescinded by her father, and that of a married woman by her husband (Numbers 30).

**Third, the vow had a specific time frame, a beginning and an end** as these two statements indicate: “Throughout the period of his separation he is consecrated to the LORD... Now this is the law for the Nazirite when the period of his separation is over” (Numbers 6:8, 13a). So, the Nazirite vow usually had both a beginning and an end.

**Fourth, there were specific guidelines and restrictions involved with the Nazirite vow.** Three guidelines are given to the Nazirite. Numbers 6:3-7 tells us that he/she was to **abstain from wine or any fermented drink**, nor was the Nazirite to **drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins, not even the seeds or skins**. Next, the Nazirite was not to **cut his hair for the length of the vow**. Last, he was **not to go near a dead body, because that would make him ceremonially unclean**. Even if a member of his immediate family died, he was not to go near the corpse.

**Numbers 6:13-20 shows the procedure to follow to complete the vow.** A sacrifice was made (Nu 6:13-17), the candidate's hair was cut and put on the altar, and the priest did the final task of completing the sacrificial process, which ended the vow (Nu 6:20). This section concludes with the statement, "This is the law of the Nazirite who vows his offering to the LORD in accordance with his separation, in addition to whatever else he can afford. He must fulfill the vow he has made, according to the law of the Nazirite" (Nu 6:21).

Although the Nazirite vow is an Old Testament concept, there is a New Testament parallel to the Nazirite vow. In Romans 12:1-2 Paul states, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." **For Christians, the ancient Nazirite vow symbolizes the need to be separate from this world, a holy people consecrated to God** (2 Ti 1:9; 1 Pe 1:15). ([What is the Nazirite/Nazarite vow?](#))

**Acts 21:24 take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law.**

KJV Acts 21:24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

- **take them and purify yourself along with them** Acts 21:26; 24:18; Exodus 19:10,14; Numbers 19:17-22; 2 Chr 30:18,19; Job 1:5; 41:25; John 3:25; Heb 9:10-14
- **so that they may shave their heads** Acts 18:18; Numbers 6:5,9,13,18; Judges 13:5; 16:17-19
- **but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law** 1 Cor 9:20; Gal 2:12
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads** (See Acts 21:27+) - Payment would be for any expenses incidental to the completion of the vow (e.g., offerings) and would be seen by others as act of piety which should further blunt the false accusations of the Judaizers.

**MacArthur** explains the need for purification commenting that "Paul, having returned to Israel from Gentile lands, was considered ceremonially unclean. As their sponsor, Paul would participate in the ceremony marking the culmination of the four men's vows. But before he could do that, he would have to undergo ritual purification himself. His willingness to do that would." (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Jack Arnold** on **pay their expenses** - When the days of the vow were completed, he was to present an offering to God which consisted of two lambs, a ram, a basket of unleavened cakes and a libation of wine. The vow ended when the person shaved his head, burned his hair in the fire and offered the sacrifice. It took a good sum of money to buy two lambs and a ram, and many poor Jews did not have the money to buy these animals to offer in order to get out of the vow. However, it was permissible for a rich Jew to give money to buy these sacrificial animals for the poor Jews under a Nazirite vow. ([Sermon](#))

**Purify** (aorist imperative) (48) ([hagnizo](#) from [hagnos](#) = freedom from defilements or impurities; see [hagios](#) = holy, saint) in the literal sense refers to ceremonial washings and purifications undertaken to "purify" oneself from ritual defilement. In the context of this ceremonial purification the idea was withdrawal from the profane (common) and dedication to God, thereby making one ceremonially ready. This sense is seen in the OT uses in the [Septuagint \(LXX\)](#), where **hagnizo** was used of the the [Nazirites](#) who took upon themselves a temporary or a life-long vow to abstain from wine and all kinds of intoxicating drink, from every defilement and from shaving the head (**Hagnizo** is used in the Septuagint of Nu 6:3 translating "abstain from..."). **Hagnizo** basically denotes a removal of that which disqualifies one for acceptable worship, resulting in a condition of purity and chastity. See uses of **hagnizo** in a Christian (rather than Jewish) context - James 4:8; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:3.

**NET Note** on **purify yourself** - That is, undergo ritual cleansing. Paul's cleansing would be necessary because of his travels in "unclean" Gentile territory. This act would represent a conciliatory gesture. Paul would have supported a "law-free" mission to the Gentiles as an option, but this gesture would represent an attempt to be sensitive to the Jews (1 Cor 9:15–22).

**Nelson Study Bible** has an interesting note on **pay...expenses** - Paul paid the expenses of the four men who had taken a vow, because the men were impoverished by the famine in Judea and did not have enough money to complete their vow by offering a sacrifice in the temple. But there might have been another reason as well. The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that when Herod Agrippa I began his reign over Judea in A.D. 41, he paid for a considerable number of Nazirite vows to show his respect for the Mosaic Law. For the sake of showing his Jewish brethren that he had not forsaken the laws of Moses, Paul did what they asked. Reputation was an issue for the apostle, as it is for all believers (see 1 Tim. 3:7).

**Pay...expenses** ([aorist imperative](#))(1159)([dapanao](#) from **dapane** = expense, cost; BDAG says it is from **dapto** = devour, of wild beasts) means to spend money, to incur expenses by spending on these other four men. 5x in NT - Mk. 5:26; Lk. 15:14; Acts 21:24; 2 Co. 12:15; Jas. 4:3. .

#### Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about defilement?](#)
- [Defilement - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

**And all will know** ([ginosko](#) by the experience of seeing 5 bald Jews they will come to know)**that there is** (absolutely) **nothing to the things which they have been told about you** - The logic is clear - anyone taking a serious Nazarite vow could hardly be accused of being against the Law of Moses or the Jewish customs. Note the repetition of the verb [katecheo](#) which earlier had spoken of the trouble makers making the ears of the zealous believers to ring as they repeated their false accusations against Paul.

**But that you yourself also walk orderly** - **Walk orderly** is [stoicheo](#) (from stoichos = row, line, rank) literally means to walk in a straight line or by rule and in this context in the [present tense](#) would demonstrate to the zealots that Paul continually conducted himself in harmony or agreement with the Law and Jewish customs. The verb **stoicheo** means to live in conformity with some presumed standard or set of customs. **Robertson** adds "The **rule** (by which to walk) is the law and Paul was not a sidestepper!"

**Keeping the Law - Keeping** is the verb [phulasso](#) (related to [phulax](#) = a guard) also in the [present tense](#) meaning that Paul continually observed the Law like a sentry watching over his guard post.

Some say that Paul following the elder's advice and then getting arrested was indicative that he was out of the will of God. Clearly that is not a valid conclusion because this "negative result" had been repeatedly prophesied (Acts 21:4, 11, Acts 20:22-23).

**William Barclay** - The leaders saw a way in which Paul could guarantee the orthodoxy of his own conduct. Four men were in the middle of observing the Nazarite vow. This was a vow taken in gratitude for some special blessing from the hand of God. It involved abstention from meat and wine for thirty days, during which the hair had to be allowed to grow. It seems that sometimes at least the last seven days had to be spent entirely in the Temple courts. At the end certain offerings had to be brought--a year old lamb for a sin-offering, a ram for a peace offering, a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil and a meat offering and a drink offering. Finally, the hair had to be shorn and burned on the altar with the sacrifice. It is obvious that this was a costly business. Work had to be given up and all the elements of the sacrifice had to be bought. It was quite beyond the resources of many who would have wished to undertake it. So it was considered an act of piety for some wealthier person to defray the expenses of someone taking the vow. That was what Paul was asked to do in the case of these four men and he consented. By so doing he could demonstrate so that all could see it that he was himself an observer of the Law.

## WAS PAUL OUT OF THE WILL OF GOD?

**Jack Arnold** observes that not every commentator thinks Paul taking a vow was in God's will - Many able Bible scholars feel that this was the worst mistake in Paul's whole ministry, for he, a preacher of grace, put himself back under the Law. This incident caused **G Campbell Morgan** to say, "This was the greatest mistake in the ministry of the Apostle Paul." **A. C. Gaebelein** says, "A strange sight to see him who taught deliverance from the Law submitting once more to the elementary things, as he calls them in his Epistle to the Galatians." **Donald Grey Barnhouse** quite indignantly says, "The picture we have here of the Apostle Paul was an opinionated, stubborn old man. The idea of a bald Paul offering sacrifices in the temple is just as ridiculous as if I were to go out

into a Roman Catholic cathedral and accept the mass from a Roman Catholic priest.” For these men, Paul had removed himself from grace and put himself back under the Mosaic Law. Was Paul in sin? Was he out of the will of God when he took this vow? My personal opinion is that he was not out of the will of God. We know from other Scripture that Paul often put himself back under the Mosaic Law in order to win men for Christ. (Arnold then quotes 1 Cor 9:20-22)...

It was not uncommon for Paul to observe the Jewish ceremonial law with a clear conscience. He had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3); he observed the Days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6); he wanted to get to Jerusalem to observe the Day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16); he also offered an offering in the temple (Acts 24:17). Lastly, it should be pointed out that Paul had taken a Nazarite vow on a previous occasion and he was not in sin then (Acts 18:18). Paul knew that he was saved by God's grace through faith in Christ and not by Law, but all unsaved Jews did not understand this, and in order to win them, he observed their rituals, customs and traditions.

Paul violently opposed going back under the Law for salvation but if, as a saved man, he could win a Jew, he would go back under the Law. When the issue of salvation and the gospel by grace came up, Paul was adamant. Remember how Paul refused to have Titus circumcised because it was an issue over grace/faith versus law/works in salvation, but he had Timothy circumcised in order not to offend the Jews.

The sum of the whole matter is this, that when the observance of the Jewish ceremonial law was urged as necessary to justification and acceptance with God, Paul resisted it; when it was demanded that its observance should be enjoined on the Gentiles, he opposed it; in all other cases he made no opposition to it, and was ready himself to comply with it, and will that others should also. (Albert Barnes, Acts)

“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4).

“Having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Col. 2:14).

“For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14).

Paul declared himself free from the Mosaic Law, for he said in First Corinthians 9:20,

“though not being myself under the Law.”

Paul was set free from the Law of Moses, but he was not free from the Law of God.

Paul, as a New Covenant Christian, was not under the Old Covenant of the Mosaic Law, but he was under the Law of Christ in the New Covenant.

“though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ.” (1 Cor. 9:21).

The law of Christ is governed and regulated on the principle of love not legalism.

“Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2).

“Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET’ and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:8-10)

“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF’” (Gal. 5:13, 14).

Paul was free from the Mosaic Law but not from law because he was under the Law of Christ which is a higher law than that of the Mosaic Law.

Paul, as a free man in Christ, keeping the liberating law of Christ! could voluntarily put himself back under the Mosaic Law as a matter of expediency to win Jewish brothers in Christ who did not understand grace in sanctification (Christian living).

As far as I can tell the Bible does not tell us that as New Covenant believers we are required to tithe, circumcise children or keep the Sabbath. However, if a Christian who understands he is saved by grace through faith in Christ wants to tithe, circumcise children or keep the Sabbath, he has the right to do so as long as he does not think these observances have anything to do with salvation or he does not require other Christians to observe them as a mark of spirituality.

The Law of Christ is a higher law than that of the Mosaic Law, but not all Christian brethren have learned this truth. For instance,

many Christians observe the Sabbath on Saturday and others are Sunday Sabbath keepers, and they honestly believe that the Christian is to observe the Sabbath, making the Sabbath conform to Mosaic Law standards. Other Christians say no New Covenant Christian is a Sabbath keeper but is to honor the Lord's Day, Sunday, as a day of worship. If a person wants to place himself under the Old Testament Sabbath principle, he is free to do so, although in my opinion he has missed the great blessing of grace under the Law of Christ. The Mosaic Law said, "Keep the Sabbath or you will be punished." The Law of Christ says, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25). Christians under the Law of Christ do not gather on the Lord's Day out of pure obedience alone, but out of genuine love for Christ. The law of Christ reveals the depth of love one has for Christ and deals with the motivation of the heart. However, if a brother wants to observe worship on Saturday, or be a Christian Sunday Sabbath keeper, he has the freedom to do so, although he does not have to do so.

"Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind" (Rom. 14:4-5).

Another case of putting oneself under the Mosaic Law is that of tithing; that is, giving 10 percent of one's money to the Lord's work. Nowhere does the New Testament specifically teach tithing for the Christian today. The Law of Christ seems to teach that a Christian is to give as the Lord has prospered him, "On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2), so that one motivated by love for Christ gives out of love for Christ and not on a legal principle per se. In the Mosaic Law, every Jew was required to give 10 percent twice a year which amounted to 20 percent. Every third year, the Jew was required to give 30 percent of his total earnings, the extra 10 percent was given to the poor. Under the Law of Christ, however, a man is commanded to give out of his pure love for Christ as he has been prospered. It may be that a man, under the Law of Christ, may only give five percent if that is all he has to give, but the Law of Christ is a higher law than the Mosaic Law and it may be that Christians ought to begin where the Old Testament leaves off, at least 10 percent and then more is given, not out of the motivation of obedience alone but out of pure love for Christ. However, if a person wants to place himself, as a free man, back under the Mosaic Law, he can, but he may well be missing the whole point of the Law of Christ.

In conclusion, it may be said that Paul was not out of the will of God in taking this vow but he may have gone too far in trying to please men. ([Acts 21:15-26 The Will of God in Concession](#))

**Acts 21:25 "But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication."**

KJV Acts 21:25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

- **we wrote** Acts 15:20,29
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **A REMINDER OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR GENTILES**

**But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain([phulasso](#)) from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication** - The elders re-emphasized that by encouraging Paul to take a vow, they were not reversing the requirements agreed upon for the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Council...

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell. (Acts 15:28-29)

In other words what the elders were doing was to emphasize that Gentile believers were not required to observe the Law of Moses.

**Nelson Study Bible** - The Christian leaders were not asking Gentiles to live like Jews; neither did they want to compel Jews to live like Gentiles. The spiritual unity of the body of believers is realized in its diversity, not in its conformity. From our diverse backgrounds and cultures we honor the same Lord.

**NET Note on having decided** - **Having decided** refers here to the decision of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:6–21+). Mention of

this previous decision reminds the reader that the issue here is somewhat different: It is not whether Gentiles must first become Jews before they can become Christians (as in Acts 15), but whether Jews who become Christians should retain their Jewish practices. Sensitivity to this issue would suggest that Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians might engage in different practices.

**NET Note on what is strangled** - That is, to refrain from eating animals that had been killed without having the blood drained from them. According to the Mosaic law (Lev 17:13–14+) Jews were forbidden to eat flesh with the blood still in it (note the preceding provision in this verse, and blood).

**Acts 21:26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.**

KJV Acts 21:26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

- **Then Paul took the men** 1 Cor 9:20
- **went into the temple** Acts 24:18
- **giving notice of the completion of the days of purification** Numbers 6:13-20
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### PAUL PURIFIED PRESENTS TEMPLE SACRIFICE

**Then Paul took the men** (same phrase Acts 21:24), **and the next day, purifying** (see [hagnizo above](#)) **himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification-** It warrants repeating why Paul would have agreed to this vow for as he wrote to the Corinthians "To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law." (1 Cor 9:20) He says he "became as a Jew" he means that without compromising the grace of God, he was willing to be as Jewish as necessary when working among the Jews. He knew that the Son had set him free from legalistic obedience to rituals and ceremonies and customs of Judaism. Therefore he considered himself free to follow some of these Jewish ways of life if it meant he would be able to win some of the Jews to Christ. And in the current context his reasoning was that he was willing to take a vow if it kept the peace, knowing that he was not keeping the vow in any legalistic sense or with any intention of hoping to gain acceptance with or be pleasing to God. He knew in Christ he was already 100% accepted. And so here he was willing to abide for a time by Jewish ceremonial regulations in order to assuage his Jewish brethren who thought he was against the Law and the customs.

**Adam Clarke** explains why Paul could have agreed to join the 4 in a vow with a clear conscience - He had shown them that their ceremonies were useless but not destructive; that they were only dangerous when they depended on them for salvation.

**ESV Study Bible** - Paul's willingness to join with the four men under a Nazirite vow is an example of his willingness to become "all things to all people" (1 Cor. 9:22, cf. 1 Cor 9:19-23) for the sake of advancing the gospel.

**Giving notice** ([present tense](#))([1229](#))([diaggello](#) from **diá** = through + **aggéllo** = to tell, declare) means to herald thoroughly, to declare fully or far and wide and so to declare plainly, fully and exactly. It seems Paul want to make sure everyone saw him, so that it would be reported that Paul was not against the Law or the customs for here he was in the Temple carrying them out!

**Robertson** adds "To the priests what day he would report the fulfilment of the vow. The priests would desire notice of the sacrifice."

**Until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them** - **Until** means that when the vow had ended. Then the sacrifice was offered. And remember Paul incurred the cost to pay for the sacrificial animals.

**NET Note on until** - The point is that the sacrifice would be offered when the days were completed. Paul honored the request of the Jewish Christian leadership completely. As the following verse makes clear, the vow was made for seven days.

**Acts 21:27 When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him,**



KJV Acts 21:27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

- **the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple** Acts 24:18
- **began to stir up all the crowd** Acts 6:12; 13:50; 14:2,5,19; 17:5,6,13; 18:12; 1 Kings 21:25
- **and laid hands on him** Acts 4:3; 5:18; 26:21; Luke 21:12
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Paul Was in the Outer Courts Large Area  
On Either side of the Inner Courts  
[Click to enlarge](#)

## ANTAGONISM AROUSED BY JEWS AGAINST PAUL

**When the seven days were almost over** - This time phrase presumably refers to the completion of the vow Paul had previously made for in the immediately preceding context Luke says "**the sacrifice was offered**" which would occur normally at the end of the vow. We see allusion to a **seven** day period in Lev 15:13-15.

**MacArthur** interprets it slightly different - The process of purification (Acts 21:26) required Paul to visit the temple on the third and seventh days. On the latter visit, when the **seven days were almost over**, the apostle encountered some old enemies: **Jews** from the Roman province of **Asia**, in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. They were likely from Ephesus, since they recognized Trophimus, who was a resident of that city (v. 29). Since Paul had ministered in Ephesus for three years (Acts 20:31), they had no trouble recognizing him. (Ibid)

**The Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple** - Remember [Asia](#) in Acts is not the continent but the [Roman province](#) that occupies roughly the eastern part of modern day Turkey ([pix](#)) and had [Ephesus as its capital](#). As described below the verb **seeing** means they took a long searching glance and said "That's him. That's Paul!" Paul would have returned to the Temple to complete the ritual associated with his vow. Where in **Asia** were these Jews from? The fact they recognized **Trophimus the Ephesian** (Acts 21:29+) and the fact that they recognized him (he had been in Ephesus some 3 years) supports the premise that these Jews were from Ephesus. The more critical point is not **where** they were from but **what** they up to!

**Seeing** (2300)([theaomai](#) from [tháomai](#) = to wonder) means take an attentive look, implying an intent contemplative gaze (as a *spectator* observes something *intently*). **Theaomai** is a gazing with personal concentration to appreciate the relevance or significance of a sight. The point is that it is these Asiatic Jews did not merely casually glance or take a quick look, but a took a long, searching look, giving attentive regard to what (WHO) they were seeing. Whether these Jews had come specifically searching for Paul is not stated, but clearly they were enemies of the Gospel and quickly showed their true devilish colors!

**A T Robertson** - In the very act of honouring the temple these **Jews from Asia** raise a hue and cry that he is dishonouring it. Paul was not known by face now to many of the Jerusalem Jews, though once the leader of the persecution after the death of Stephen and the outstanding young Jew of the day. But the Jews in Ephesus knew him only too well, some of whom are here at the Pentecostal feast. They had plotted against him in Ephesus to no purpose (Acts 19:23-41; Acts 20:19), but now a new opportunity had come. It is possible that the cry was led by Alexander put forward by the Jews in Ephesus (Acts 19:33) who may be the same as Alexander the coppersmith who did Paul so much harm (2 Ti 4:14). Paul was not in the inner sanctuary (ho [naos](#)), but only in the outer courts (to [hieron](#)).

Word Pictures in the New Testament.

**Began to stir up all the crowd** ("threw the whole crowd into consternation") - These Jews from Asia wasted no time in inciting the crowd. Stir up is in the [imperfect tense](#) which vividly pictures these Asiatic Jews going through the Temple crowd, stirring up one group, then moving on to stir up another group. It is not difficult to see how it would not take long to foment considerable consternation among the Jews in the outer courtyard. These rabble rousers were good at their evil endeavor, for these propagators of falsehood had a good instructor (Jn 8:44)! "They attacked and seized Paul before the charge was made." (Robertson)

These Jews "stirred up as an irrational (violent) mob," i.e. into a "mixed-up" situation where volatile (unstable) elements come together and result in confusion. (Hill)

**Began to stir up** (roused up, troubled, instigated confusion)(4797)([sugcheo/sugchunno](#) from **sun** = with, together + **cheo** = to pour) literally means to pour together "precisely like the Latin *confundo*, to confound" (Robertson), not a meaning found in the NT. Figuratively, it means to cause dismay, confound, be thrown into confusion, be amazed, be stirred up (Acts 2:6). In the present context these Jews from Asia were actively, willfully stirring up trouble in the Temple - a veritable "Tempest in a Temple" (analogous

to a "[Temple in a Teapot](#)")! **Sugcheo** is the same verb used in Acts 19 where Demetrius and his cohorts stirred up the Ephesians and soon "the assembly **was in confusion** (sugcheo)." (Acts 19:32+). Robertson suggests (and may be spot on) that "The Jews from Ephesus had learned it from Demetrius the silversmith."

It is interesting that **sugcheo** is used to describe the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel so that men could not understand one another (Ge 11:7). Here in Acts 2 we see a "reversal" in a sense of what God did at Babel, Moses recording "its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth." (Ge 11:9)

**And laid hands on him** - Having undoubtedly seen that they were successful in arousing the Jews in the Temple area, the **Jews from Asia** were emboldened to seize Paul.

**Laid...upon** (seized)([1911](#))(**epiballo** from **epi** = upon + **ballo** = throw) means to cast over or throw upon (coats on donkey Mk 11:7). In the active sense (transitive), of a violent movement meaning to throw something over someone (Rev 18:19), and in the present passage to lay hands on the apostle Paul. It is notable that the first 3 uses of **epiballo** describe laying hands on Jewish believers or leaders (Acts 4:3; Acts 5:18; Acts 12:1) Jesus had used this same verb (epiballo) to prophesy regarding the persecutions Luke describes in Acts and in the present passage of Paul. Jesus had declared "they will **lay** their **hands** on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake." (Lk. 21:12)

**Epiballo** - 18v NT - Mt. 9:16; Mt. 26:50; Mk. 4:37; Mk. 11:7; Mk. 14:46; Mk. 14:72; Lk. 5:36; Lk. 9:62; Lk. 15:12; Lk. 20:19; Lk. 21:12; Jn. 7:30; Jn. 7:44; Acts 4:3; Acts 5:18; Acts 12:1; Acts 21:27; 1 Co. 7:35

**McGee** - As mobs generally do, this mob acts on assumption and misinformation.

**Acts 21:28 crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."**

KJV Acts 21:28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

- **Men of Israel, come to our aid** Acts 19:26-28; 24:5,6
- **his is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people** Acts 21:21; 6:13,14; 24:5,6,18; 26:20,21
- **besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple** Jer 7:4-15; Lam 1:10
- [Watch video of Paul's arrest and speech before the crowd](#)
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **HELP! AN ANTI-SEMITE IS IN OUR MIDST**

**John MacArthur** sets the context noting that "This passage marks a major transition in the life and ministry of the apostle Paul. Since his conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1ff+), he had ministered freely (except for brief imprisonments such as in Philippi [Acts 16:23ff+; cf. 2 Cor. 11:23]). But from this point on in Acts, Paul will be a prisoner....During this incarceration, Paul gave six separate defenses of his actions: before the unruly mob at Jerusalem (Acts 21:27ff.), the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30ff.), Felix (Acts 24:1ff.), Festus (Acts 25:1-12), Herod Agrippa (Acts 25:13ff.), and the Jews at Rome (Acts 28:17-28). Those masterful defenses ably answered the false charges leveled against him—a fact even the Roman authorities acknowledged (Acts 26:30-32). (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Sir Walter Raleigh** - We see by experience that dogs do always bark at those they know not, and that it is their nature to accompany one another in those clamours; and so it is with the inconsiderate multitude who, wanting that virtue which we call honesty in all men, and that especial gift of God which we call charity in Christian men, condemn without hearing and wound without offence given, led thereunto by uncertain report only, which King James truly acknowledgeth for the father of all lies.

**Crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid!"** - Their cry might be subtitled "How to start a riot!" They are **crying out** as if Paul was threatening to kill someone (although in a sense God was using him to "kill" Judaism's focus on keeping the Law to earn righteousness). They continued crying out with intense passion commanding other to come ([present imperative](#)). You can almost see them pointing at Paul as they cry out. Imagine what was going through Paul's mind!

**Crying out** ([present tense](#)) ([2896](#)) ([krazo](#)) refers to a loud cry or vociferation, expressing deep emotion. **Krazo** is one of those [onomatopoeic](#) words, the very pronunciation of which imitates the hoarse cry of the raven ([listen](#)), and can be an inarticulate and brutish sound or an exclamation of fear or pain. Abbott-Smith says "generally used of inarticulate cries, *to scream, cry out* (Aesch., etc.)" It is used of the cry of an animal, the barking of a dog and two men in a quarrel, trying to bawl each other down (so Aristophanes, Knights, 1017)" "The prophet in awful earnestness, and as with a scream of anguish, cries over Israel' (Morison) **Krazō** was also a technical, rabbinic term to refer to the loud summons of a prophet, needing to be heard and that may be somewhat the intent in the present context. These Jews perceived a threat to their religion and thus were giving a loud summons much like Jewish prophets would warn of danger.

Luke's uses of **krazo** in Acts - Acts 7:57; Acts 7:60; Acts 14:14; Acts 16:17; Acts 19:28; Acts 19:32; Acts 19:34; Acts 21:28; Acts 21:36; Acts 23:6; Acts 24:21;

**Come to our aid** ([997](#)) ([boetheo](#) from **boé** = a cry, exclamation + **théō** = to run) means to run on hearing a cry, to give assistance. Boetheo was originally used in a military sense and that may be the sense intended in this passage.

**Boetheo** - 8x in NT - Mt. 15:25; Mk. 9:22; Mk. 9:24; Acts 16:9; Acts 21:28; 2 Co. 6:2; Heb. 2:18; Rev. 12:16

**This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place- Preaches** is more accurately rendered *teaches* (for it is the verb [didasko](#)). Their lying accusations are very similar to the accusations in Acts 21:21+ and may well have been some of the same men.

**Guzik** - The charges against Paul in Acts 21:28 were an echo of the charges Stephen was executed for (Acts 6:13-14+). Paul helped preside over that execution; now he is accused in a similar way. (Enduring Word Bible Commentary – Acts)

**Arnold** quips that "They accused Paul of hating the Jews! opposing the Mosaic Law and speaking evil against the temple. For a Jew, this was like an American challenging motherhood, baseball and apple pie." ([Sermon](#))

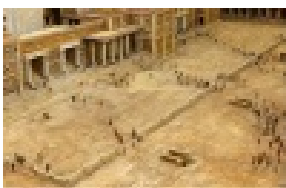
Notice this slanderers brought three charges against Paul as they cried out -

(1) **Preaches/teaches against the Jews** (a lie, read Ro 9:1-5+, Ro 10:1+);

(2) **Opposed the Law of Moses** - "That was a particularly serious accusation in this setting, since the Jewish people were especially zealous for the law at Pentecost. Originally a celebration of the first fruits of the harvest, in Paul's day Pentecost had come to be a celebration of the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. Charging Paul at this time with teaching against the law was sure to infuriate the crowds." (MacArthur)

(3) **Spoke against this place (the Temple)**- This same accusation was leveled against Jesus (Mk 14:5-58) and Stephen (Acts 6:13-14+) and was instrumental in their murders.

**And besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place** - These pernicious purveyors of perversity were falsely accusing Paul of bringing Gentiles into the inner or second court, beyond the barrier restricting Gentiles.



Click to enlarge

**NET Note** on into **the Temple** - The specific reference is to the Court of the Sons of Israel (see the note following the term "unclean" at the end of this verse).

**THE JEWISH "NO TRESPASSING" SIGN** - which the Jews falsely accused Paul of violating taking a Gentile - The [Temple Warning inscription](#), also known as the **Temple Balustrade inscription** or the **Soreg inscription**<sup>[2]</sup>, is an inscription that hung along the [balustrade](#) outside the [Sanctuary](#) of the [Second Temple](#) in [Jerusalem](#). Two of these tablets have been found.<sup>[3]</sup> (HERE IS THE TRANSLATION OF ONE OF THESE RECOVERED STONES) - "No stranger is to enter within the balustrade round the temple and enclosure. Whoever is caught will be himself responsible for his ensuing death."

**NOTE:** Click [the picture of the Temple Complex](#) above and read the note in the bottom left corner regarding the "[soreg \(click for more detail\)](#)" the low, latticed railing separating Temple courts (only for Jews) from the Court of the Gentiles.) (See [notes](#) on Eph 2:14)

**Josephus** records that "When you went through these first cloisters unto the second court of the Temple, there was a **partition made of stone** all round, whose height was three cubits. Its construction was very elegant; upon it stood pillars at equal distances from one another, declaring the law of purity, some in Greek and some in Roman letters that no foreigner should go within the sanctuary"

In summary, this physical barrier in the Temple Complex illustrated the barrier of hostility and hate that separated Jew and Gentile. God had originally separated Jews from Gentiles (cf. Isaiah 5:1-7; Mt 21:33) for the purpose of redeeming both groups, not for saving the Jews alone. In fact God had placed the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple Complex for the very purpose of winning Gentiles to Himself. It was meant to be a place for Jewish evangelism of Gentiles, a place for winning proselytes to Judaism and of thereby bringing them "near." Instead the intervening dividing wall with its barrier shut the Gentile out from the presence of God! It was also that very court (the court of the Gentiles) that instead of using as a place of witness to the pagan Gentiles of the true and living God, the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day usurped and converted to "**a robbers' den**" (Mk 11:17)!

**Vincent** - The temple proper was on the highest of a series of terraces which rose from the outer court, or Court of the Gentiles. In this outer court any stranger might worship. Between this and the terraces was a balustrade of stone, with columns at intervals, on which Greek and Latin inscriptions warned all Gentiles against advancing farther on pain of death. Beyond this balustrade rose a flight of fourteen steps to the first platform, on which was the Court of the Women, surrounded by a wall. In this court were the treasury, and various chambers, in one of which the Nazarites performed their vows. It was here that the Asiatic Jews discovered Paul.

**Robertson** - Worse than his teaching (didaskōn) is his dreadful deed: **he actually brought**. This he had a right to do if they only went into the court of the Gentiles. But these Jews mean to imply that Paul had brought Greeks beyond this court into the court of Israel.

**Nelson Study Bible** - The temple in New Testament times was surrounded by three courts. The innermost court was the Court of Israel where Jewish men could offer their sacrifices. Only consecrated priests actually entered the temple building itself, and only the high priest could enter the inner sanctuary of the Most Holy Place—once a year on the Day of Atonement (see Heb. 9:7). The second court was the Court of the Women where Jewish families could gather for prayer and worship. The outer court was the Court of the Gentiles, open to all who would worship God. If any Gentile went beyond the barrier into the second court, he or she would be liable to the death penalty. The Roman authorities, out of respect for the Jewish religion, authorized the death sentence for this trespass even for their own Roman citizens.

**Robertson** has some interesting comments - Like the charges against Stephen and Jesus before him truth and falsehood are mixed. Paul had said that being a Jew would not save a man. He had taught the law of Moses was not binding on Gentiles. He did hold, like Jesus and Stephen, that the temple was not the only place to worship God. But Paul gloried himself in being a Jew, considered the Mosaic law righteous for Jews, and was honouring the temple at this very moment.

**Temple** (2413) (**hieros**) in this context refers to the whole sacred area of the Temple with its buildings, courts, walls, and gates (cf Mt 21.12).

**Defiled** (2840) (**koinoo** from **koinos** = common, unclean, profane, that which lies common or open to all) means to make **koinos** or common. And so the essence of this accusation using **koinoo** was that Paul had profaned or treated the Temple with irreverence and contempt, desecrating it, polluting it and causing it to become ritually unacceptable. The **perfect tense** signifies that the defilement occurred at a point in time (explained in v29) and this defilement was enduring or lasting.

**Robertson** observes that "These enemies of Paul had now raised the cry of **'fire'** and vanish from the scene completely (Acts 24:19+). This charge was absolutely false as we shall see, made out of inferences of hate and suspicion."

**Acts 21:29 For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.**

KJV Acts 21:29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

- **Trophimus** Acts 20:4; 2 Ti 4:20
- [Watch video of Paul's arrest and speech before the crowd](#)

- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ACCUSERS ATTEMPT TO SUBSTANTIATE FALSE CHARGES

**For (gar)** is a term of explanation - These lying Jews back up their false charges by saying Paul defiled the holy place by allowing it to be contaminated by a Gentile!

**They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him** - This may have been true, but does not substantiate their allegation that he had entered the area of the Temple grounds forbidden to Gentiles.

**Warren Wiersbe** quips "With their emotions running at full speed, and their brains in neutral, these men argued: (1) wherever Paul went, his Gentile friends went; (2) Paul was seen in the temple; therefore, his friends had been in the temple too! Such is the logic of prejudice." (BEC)

**Trophimus** - 3x in NT - Acts 20:4; Acts 21:29; 2 Tim. 4:20

### Related Resources:

- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Trophimus](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Trophimus](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Trophimus](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Trophimus](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Trophimus](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Trophimus](#)

**And they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple** - NET = "into the inner temple courts." [See the preceding discussion](#) for more detail of where Paul had allegedly brought Trophimus. They did not say Paul had simply brought him into the Temple complex, for it was not illegal with the Jews to bring a Gentile into the Court of the Gentiles. Clearly, they are accusing him of taking a Gentile through the barrier beyond which no Gentile could pass without risking a death sentence by the Jews (this is one area the Romans allowed the Jews to execute any Gentile transgressor - read [Josephus Wars 6.2.4](#)).

**Supposed** (thought) ([3543](#)) ([nomizo](#) from **nomos** = law, custom) means to think or believe something without being fully settled in mind or opinion. To suppose something that is not true (e.g., Moses wrongly supposed the Israelites would understand God had sent him to deliver them; in Acts 8:20 of Simon's false assumption he could buy the Holy Spirit's power, of the Philippian jailer's nearly fatal supposition that the prisoners had escaped). In short they made the presumption that Paul was guilty of this religious crime. They fabricated this charge.

Can you see how illogical their false charge was? If Paul was participating in the purification rite himself, it would be absurd to think he would carry out an act that would produce ritual defilement!

**Robertson** - This is the way of the mob-mind in all ages. Many an innocent man has been rushed to his death by the fury of a lynching party.

**Frank Allen** - The Jewish rule was written and printed before the temple that "No man of alien race is to enter within the balustrade and fence that goes round the temple. If anyone is taken in the act, let him know that he has himself to blame for the penalty of death that follows." Some of the envious Jews, who had followed Paul from Asia, saw Trophimus of Ephesus with Paul and they imagined that he had taken him, though a Greek, into the temple.

**Utley** comments that "These Jews from Asia (Ephesus) knew both Paul and Trophimus and had earlier planned Paul's death (cf. 20:3). Now they saw their opportunity to play on Jewish racial biases and have Paul killed (cf. vv. 31, 36)."

**Acts 21:30 Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut.**

KJV Acts 21:30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

NLT Acts 21:30 The whole city was rocked by these accusations, and a great riot followed. Paul was grabbed



and dragged out of the Temple, and immediately the gates were closed behind him.

- **Then all the city was provoked** Acts 16:20-22; 19:29; 26:21; Mt 2:3; 21:10
- **taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple** Acts 7:57,58; 16:19; Luke 4:29; 2 Cor 11:26
- [Watch video of Paul's arrest and speech before the crowd](#)
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE MOB "COAGULATES"

[Coagulation](#) describes flowing blood which coagulates into a unified mass, and so is an apt description of Jews flowing in from all areas of Jerusalem, gathering together in a mass. So figuratively they are "coagulating." Apologies for the metaphor, but sometimes my medical background comes back to haunt me when I am writing comments.

**Then all the city was provoked** - **Provoked** is the first word in the sentence emphasizing this fact! Recall it is the time of the Feast of Pentecost, one of the feasts Jewish males were required to attend each year, so Jerusalem would have been bustling. Note the phrase **all the city** indicates that the false charges against Paul had [spread like wildfire](#). Remember that this was the time of the Jewish Feast of Pentecost and the population of Jerusalem swelled from 200,000 to over two million and the Romans did not want a riot.

**Alexander Maclaren** wrote, "It is always easier to rouse men to fight for their 'religion' than to live by it."

**G. Butler** wrote, "It needs to be noted that the culprits were religious people, in fact, very devoutly religious. To come all the way from the province of Asia to Jerusalem for special religious days indicates considerable devotion to religion. But as history verifies again and again, some of the worst persecution for believers has come from very religious people. Catholics have shed the blood of multitudes of believers over the centuries. The same is true of devout Muslims and their hostilities toward believers. All enemies of God's people are not atheists or non-religious. Religions that do not exalt Jesus Christ as the Savior of mankind will greatly oppose those who do. Satan delights to persecute through religion, for it is a most effective disguise of evil."

**Biblical Illustrator** - Unity of action does not always indicate unity of purpose. Men often work together when they have little in common. In a mob, there will be some who want to gain concessions from those in power; others who seek revenge for real or fancied injuries; others, again, who would merely overthrow the established order of things; and yet others who look alone for opportunities of plunder. And this confusion of purpose is the weakness of a mob. Men must have a common object of pursuit to be strong in a common effort. They must be united in heart, as well as in endeavour, to carry everything before them. As Bishop Hall quaintly says, "The multitude is a beast of many heads; every head hath a several mouth, every mouth a several tongue, and every tongue a several accent; every head hath a several brains, and every brain thoughts of their own; so it is hard to find a multitude without some division."

This account is similar to the riot in Ephesus in Acts 19:29+ where Luke recorded that "The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia."

**Andrews** notes that "The people didn't passively hear the accusations against Paul, but they aggressively responded to the accusations. Their anger was aroused against Paul." (Ibid)

**Provoked** (moved, stirred up) ([2795](#)) (**kineo**) means to move, put in motion (Mt 23:4) (English cinema, kinetics) **Kineo** has several senses - (a) of wagging the head, Mt. 27:39; Mk 15:29; Lxx = 2 Ki 19:21; Job 16:4; (b) of the general activity of the human being, Acts 17:28; (c) of the "moving" of mountains, Rev. 6:14, in the sense of removing, as in Rev. 2:5, of removing a lampstand (there figuratively of causing a local church to be discontinued); (d) figuratively, of exciting, stirring up feelings and passions, Acts 21:30 (Passive Voice); Acts 24:5, "a mover;" (e) of "moving burdens," Matt. 23:4."

Here in Acts 21:30 **kineo** means to be moved, put into commotion or tumult. (Jos., Ant. 3, 13)

**Friberg** - (1) as putting something in motion; (a) literally move; of moving the head as a sign of contempt shake, wag the head (Mt 27.39 ); (b) figuratively, of a mental or spiritual impression that stimulates to action move, arouse, stir up (Acts 21.30); politically instigate, stir up, cause (Acts 24.5); (2) as moving something away remove (Mt 23.4); (3) passive move about, come and go, carry on (Acts 17.28)

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek **kineō** means "to set something in motion, to propel forward." When used figuratively of the mental or spiritual realm it means "to disturb, move, cause" (cf. Bauer). In matters of politics and law **kineō** usually means "to instigate" or "employ action against." It is also a sign of contempt in the sense of "call into question." In the Septuagint **kineō** frequently translates the Hebrew **nûa'** which means "to shake one's head as a sign of derision or scorn" (Job 16:4; Lamentations 2:15). In the New



Testament *kineō* expresses the hypocrisy of the Pharisees' behavior in relationship to the Law. Jesus accused the Pharisees of putting heavy burdens on other men and yet they would not "move" even "one of their fingers" to help (Matthew 23:4). Luke used *kineō* when he recorded Paul's address to the men of Athens; in a figurative sense it referred to the omnipresent spiritual realm of God in whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). *Kineō* also means "removal" or "rejection," as in the case of the church at Ephesus whose punishment was removal of their lampstand if they did not repent (Revelation 2:5). It also means "to excite, to arouse passion, to incite to riot, to disturb," or "to throw into commotion," as was the case when the whole city of Jerusalem was set in motion against Paul (Acts 21:30). Finally, the New Testament also uses *kineō* to denote an expression of derision, revulsion, or contempt. When the people passed Jesus while He was on the cross, they "wagged" their heads, which was an expression of the contempt they felt for Him (Matthew 27:39). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Kineo** - 8x in 8v - move(2), moved(1), provoked(1), remove(1), stirs(1), wagging(2).

Matt. 23:4; Matt. 27:39; Mk. 15:29; Acts 17:28+; Acts 21:30; Acts 24:5+; Rev. 2:5; Rev. 6:14

**Kineo** in the Septuagint -

Gen. 7:14; Gen. 7:21; Gen. 8:17; Gen. 8:19; Gen. 9:2; Gen. 11:2; Gen. 20:1; Lev. 11:44; Lev. 11:46; Num. 14:44; Jdg. 6:18; Jdg. 9:9; Jdg. 9:11; Jdg. 9:13; Jdg. 20:37; 1 Sam. 1:13; 2 Sam. 15:20; 2 Ki. 19:21; 2 Ki. 23:18; 2 Chr. 35:15; Job 13:25; Job 16:4; Ps. 22:7; Prov. 17:13; Cant. 2:17; Cant. 4:6; Isa. 22:25; Isa. 33:20; Isa. 37:22; Isa. 41:7; Isa. 46:7; Jer. 10:4; Jer. 14:10; Jer. 18:16; Jer. 48:17; Lam. 2:15; Dan. 2:3; Dan. 4:19; Dan. 11:38; Zeph. 2:15;

**And the people rushed together** - Literally, "there was a running together". Forget about [due process](#)! It was a tumultuous [concourse](#), where concourse describes the process of coming together and merging. You can almost picture the narrow streets of the Old City with people running down them like rushing rivers!

**Rushed together** (4890) (**sundrome** from **suntrecho** = run together; English - [syndrome](#) = complex of things coming together) is a noun used only here in the NT and means running together, forming a mob. And it describes people coming together quickly to form the mob. **Gilbrant** adds "**Sundromē** can be found in classical Greek from the Fourth Century B.C. in reference to a "tumultuous [concourse](#)" of people (cf. *Liddell-Scott*). It can also be found in the apocryphal books of the Septuagint with the same meaning (e.g., Judith 10:18). In other Greek writings **sundromē** means "tumultuously," and specifically it refers to a "determination" of blood, "concurrence" of symptoms, or even a "provisional concession" of an adversary's position (ibid.).

**And taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple** - They had already laid their hands on him, seizing him, but not Luke uses another verb to emphasize that they had him in their grasp. Their hypocrisy is glaring -- they drag him out so they can "do him in" but not inside the Temple lest it be "defiled" by his corpse! In their blind prejudice and hypocrisy they could not even begin to comprehend that their murder of this innocent man would make them guilty of far worse than "ritual defilement!" **Dragged** is in the [imperfect tense](#) depicting their dragging him along again and again. Robertson somewhat sarcastically says "They were saving the temple by dragging Paul outside." Religion does funny things to people's minds!

**Taking hold** (seizing) (1949) (**epilambano** from **epi** = upon + **lambano** = take hold of) means to lay hold of, get a good grip on, take possession of. While this verb sometimes meant a trustful holding of one's hand, that was definitely not the sense here where it depicts a violent seizure of Paul by the mob, a sudden and forcible movement in getting hold of this rabble rouser.

**Epilambano** in the NT - catch(2), give help(1), gives help(1), seized(2), take hold(2), taking(1), taking hold(1), took(4), took hold(5).

Matt. 14:31; Mk. 8:23; Lk. 9:47; Lk. 14:4; Lk. 20:20; Lk. 20:26; Lk. 23:26; Acts 9:27+; Acts 16:19+; Acts 17:19+; Acts 18:17+; Acts 21:3; Acts 21:33; Acts 23:19; 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Tim. 6:19; Heb. 2:16; Heb. 8:9

**And immediately the doors were shut** - "With a bang and at once." (Robertson) Don't you love Luke's details? These wicked men are going to make absolutely sure the inner Temple was "*protected*" from the spillage of Paul's blood! How blind "religion" can be when it veers from God's truth! Apparently **the doors** refers to **The doors** between the inner court and the court of the Gentiles." (See [picture](#))

**Jack Andrews** makes an interesting observation - The closing of the doors also spoke of rejection—Paul was expelled, not welcomed, and would be taken care of. John Phillips wrote, "What did James and the others think of themselves? We wonder... They apparently did nothing to secure (Paul's) release, nothing to speak on his behalf, nothing to appeal to the Jews of Jerusalem to give Paul fair play. They sent no one to the Roman authorities to assure the commander of the garrison that Paul was innocent of the charges leveled against him." This is shameful by the church at Jerusalem—Paul had gotten in the mess he was in because of the advice of the church. They surely didn't have Paul's back—with friends like that who needs enemies! Where was the church when he needed them? (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts)(**Comment:** I would defend the church leaders - they may not have been present and this was a murderous crowd and any attempt to rescue Paul would likely be futile.)

**Utley** - apparently the gate between the Court of Israel and the Court of the Women. The Temple had its own police force of Levites who kept order. This action was to (1) keep the Temple from being defiled or (2) to keep Paul from trying to return to the Temple for safety. These Jews acted in exactly the same manner as did the mob at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19).

**MacArthur** paints the picture of this [sadistic](#) scene - The temple guards shoved the frenzied mob outside (so Paul's death would not defile the temple; cf. 2 Kings 11:15) and then closed the doors (between the Court of the Women and the Court of the Gentiles). Their religious zeal inflamed by the false accusations of the Asian Jews, the infuriated and irrational crowd began savagely beating Paul. Too impatient to drag him out of the city and stone him (as had been done with Stephen), they intended to beat the apostle to death on the spot. They would have succeeded, but God providentially intervened to protect His servant. Help arrived in the form of Roman soldiers. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Dragged** (1670)(**helko**) means to drag or draw toward without necessarily the notion of force as in *sūrō*. Of course that distinction seems to break down in the current passage (Acts 21:30) where undoubtedly there is force exerted on dragging Paul's body. This is Luke's second use to describe Paul being dragged - "But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized ([epilambano](#) as here in Acts 21:30) Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities," (Acts 16:19+).

**W E Vine** on **helko** - to draw," differs from *syrō*, as "drawing" does from violent "dragging." It is used of "drawing" a net, John 21:6, 11 (cp. [suro](#) in Jn 21: 8); Trench remarks (see below) "At Jn 21:6 and Jn 21:11 **helkō** (or *helkyō*) is used; for there a drawing of the net to a certain point is intended; by the disciples to themselves in the ship, by Peter to himself upon the shore. But at Jn 21:8 *helkō* gives place to **syrō**: for nothing is there intended but the dragging of the net, which had been fastened to the ship, after it through the water" ([Trench's Syn](#)). This less violent significance, usually present in *helkō*, but always absent from *syrō*, is seen in the metaphorical use of *helkō*, to signify "drawing" by inward power, by Divine impulse, John 6:44; John 12:32. So in the Sept., e.g., Song of Sol. Song 1:4; Jer. 31:3, "with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." It is used of a more vigorous action, in John 18:10, of "drawing" a sword; in Acts 16:19; Acts 21:30, of forcibly "drawing" men to or from a place; so in Jas. 2:6.

**Helko** - 8v - drag(1), dragged(2), draw(1), draws(1), drew(2), haul(1). - Jn. 6:44; Jn. 12:32; Jn. 18:10; Jn. 21:6; Jn. 21:11; Acts 16:19; Acts 21:30; Jas. 2:6

[Trench on drag](#) - [suro/syro](#)(4951) Drag *helkyo* (Strong's 1670) Draw

The difference between *syro* and *helkyo* is theologically important and is best expressed in English by translating *syrein* as "to drag" and *helkyein* as "to draw." The notion of force is always present in *syrein*. Thus Plutarch spoke of the headlong course of a river "as dragging [*syron*] and carrying along everything." Consequently, where persons and not things are in question, *syrein* involves the notion of violence. Although the notion of force or violence may be present in *helkyein*, it is not necessarily so, any more than the English *draw*, when used to refer to mental and moral attraction, necessarily implies the use of force.

Only by keeping these differences in mind can we correct the erroneous interpretation of two doctrinally important passages in the Gospel of John. The first is John 12:32 : "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples [*pantas helkyso*] to myself." But how does a crucified and exalted Savior draw all people to himself? Certainly not by force, for the will is incapable of force, but by the divine attractions of his love. In John 6:44 Jesus said: "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him [*helkyse auton*]." Those who deny theories of "irresistible grace" that portray men as machines that are dragged to God must assert that *helkyse* refers only to the drawing power of love, to the Father's attracting men to the Son. Had *syrein* been used in either of these Johannine texts, then those who believe that "irresistible grace" means forcing someone to believe against his or her will might argue that Jesus' declarations leave no room for any other interpretation than theirs. But *syrein* was not used in these passages.

More specifically, *helkyein* predominantly refers to drawing someone or something to a certain point; *syrein* refers to dragging something after oneself. Thus Lucian, in comparing a man to a fish that has been hooked and dragged through the water, described him as "being dragged [*syromenon*] and led by necessity." Frequently, *syrein* refers to something that is dragged or trailed on the ground, quite apart from its own will, such as a dead body. To confirm this, compare John 21:6; John 21:11 with John 21:8 of the same chapter. In John 21:6 and John 21:11, *helkyein* refers to drawing the net full of fish to a certain point on the ship and to drawing the net to the land. But in John 21:8, where the disciples drag the net full of fish behind them through the water, *syrein*, not *helkyein*, is used. The Authorized Version maintains this distinction, as does De Wette's German translation. Neither the Vulgate nor Beza, however, distinguish the two words, which they translate by *traho* (draw)

**Acts 21:31 While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.**

KJV Acts 21:31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

- **While they were seeking to kill him** Acts 22:22; 26:9,10; John 16:2; 2 Cor 11:23-33
- **a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort** Acts 23:17; 24:7,22; 25:23; Jn 18:12
- **that all Jerusalem was in confusion** Acts 21:38; 17:5; 19:40; 1 Ki 1:41; Mt 26:5; Mark 14:2
- [Watch video of Paul's arrest and speech before the crowd](#)
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ROMAN RESCUE IN THE NICK OF TIME

**In the nick of time** is an idiom which means at the last possible moment before a deadline or before something begins or ends (in this case Paul's life!). It means just in time; just before it's too late. If something happens in the nick of time, it happens at the last possible moment, when it is almost too late. But remember that Jesus had promised that Paul would "bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel." (Acts 9:15). And as far as I can discern, he had not yet appeared before any kings. The protective [sovereign hand of the Lord](#) was upon His servant and in [His perfect providence](#), the Roman rescue was just in the nick of time!

**While they were seeking to kill him** - Luke does not say but the mob very likely had already begun [pummeling](#) him outside the Temple (cf Acts 21:32). Paul's death was their desire.

**Seeking** (2212)([zeteeo](#)) implies giving attention and priority to and deliberately pursuing after -- certainly a good description of this ravenous, confused crowd!

**To kill**(615) (**apokteino** from **apó** = intensifies meaning + **kteíno** = slay) means to kill outright or to put to death in any manner. To kill someone results in a state of separation. To kill physically (Mt. 10:28; Mt. 14:5; Jn 18:31; often of Christ's death; in Rev. 2:13, Rev. 9:15, Rev. 11:13). **Vine** writes "metaphorically, Ro 7:11, of the power of Sin, which is personified ([Sin "personified" as a principle](#)), as "finding occasion, through the commandment," and inflicting deception and **spiritual death**, i.e., separation from God, realized through the presentation of the commandment to conscience, breaking in upon the fancied state of freedom; the argument shows the **power of the Law**, not to deliver from sin, but to enhance its sinfulness; in 2 Cor. 3:6, **'the letter kills**," signifies not the literal meaning of Scripture as contrasted with the spiritual, but the power of the Law to bring home the knowledge of guilt and its punishment; in Eph. 2:16 **"having put to death** the enmity" describes the work of Christ through His death in annulling the enmity, "the Law" (Eph. 2:15), between Jew and Gentile, reconciling regenerate Jew and Gentile to God in spiritual unity "in one body." Revelation uses *apokteinō* in an exclusively literal sense;

**Zodhiates** - (I) Particularly, to put to death in any manner (Matt. 14:5; 16:21; 21:35, 38, 39; Mark 6:19; John 18:31; Rev. 6:8; Sept.: Ge 4:8; Ge 18:25; Ex. 4:24; Josh. 11:10; Jdg. 9:5; 1 Sa 17:46). With the reflexive *heautón*, himself, to kill oneself (Jn 8:22); passive to be slain, meaning to die, perish (Rev. 9:18, 20). (II) Metaphorically, to kill eternally, to bring under eternal condemnation of death, to kill the soul, equivalent to causing the soul to perish in Gehenna (Mt. 10:28; Lk 12:5 [cf. Ro 7:11; 2 Cor. 3:6]). (III) Metaphorically, to destroy or abolish the enmity (Eph 2:16; Sept.: Ps. 78:47). (Ibid)

**Apokteino** - 74x in 70v - kill(33), killed(29), killing(1), kills(5), put... to death(2), put to death(4).

Matt. 10:28; Matt. 14:5; Matt. 16:21; Matt. 17:23; Matt. 21:35; Matt. 21:38; Matt. 21:39; Matt. 22:6; Matt. 23:34; Matt. 23:37; Matt. 24:9; Matt. 26:4; Mk. 3:4; Mk. 6:19; Mk. 8:31; Mk. 9:31; Mk. 10:34; Mk. 12:5; Mk. 12:7; Mk. 12:8; Mk. 14:1; Lk. 9:22; Lk. 11:47; Lk. 11:48; Lk. 11:49; Lk. 12:4; Lk. 12:5; Lk. 13:4; Lk. 13:31; Lk. 13:34; Lk. 18:33; Lk. 20:14; Lk. 20:15; Jn. 5:18; Jn. 7:1; Jn. 7:19; Jn. 7:20; Jn. 7:25; Jn. 8:22; Jn. 8:37; Jn. 8:40; Jn. 11:53; Jn. 12:10; Jn. 16:2; Jn. 18:31; Acts 3:15; Acts 7:52; Acts 21:31; Acts 23:12; Acts 23:14; Acts 27:42; Rom. 7:11; Rom. 11:3; 2 Co. 3:6; Eph. 2:16; 1 Thess. 2:15; Rev. 2:13; Rev. 2:23; Rev. 6:8; Rev. 6:11; Rev. 9:5; Rev. 9:15; Rev. 9:18; Rev. 9:20; Rev. 11:5; Rev. 11:7; Rev. 11:13; Rev. 13:10; Rev. 13:15; Rev. 19:21

**Apokteino** in the Septuagint

Gen. 4:8 = Cain rose up against Abel his brother and **killed** him., Ge 4:14-15,23,25; 12:12; 18:25; 20:2,11; 26:7; 27:41-42; 34:25-26; 37:18,20,26; 38:7; 42:37; 49:6; Exod. 1:16; 4:23-24; 5:21; 13:15; 16:3; 17:3; 21:14; 22:19,24; 23:7; 32:12,27; Lev. 20:4,15-16; Num. 11:15; 16:13,41; 20:4; 21:5; 22:33; 25:5; 31:7-8,17; 35:19,21;

Deut. 9:28; 13:9; 22:22,25; 32:39; Jos. 7:5; 8:24; 10:11,26; 11:11,17; 13:22; Jdg. 7:25; 8:17ff; 9:5,18,24,45,54,56; 15:12; 16:2; 20:5; 1 Sam. 15:3,8; 16:2; 17:46; 24:10-11,18; 2 Sam. 4:10-12; 12:9; 14:7; 23:21; 1 Ki. 2:5,32; 12:27; 18:12-14; 19:1,10,14; 2 Ki. 8:12; 10:9; 11:18; 17:25; 1 Chr. 2:3; 7:21; 10:14; 11:23; 19:18; 2 Chr. 21:4,13; 22:1,8-9,11; 25:4; 28:6-7,9; 36:17; Neh. 9:26; Est. 2:21; 9:6,15; Job 1:15,17; Ps. 10:8; 59:11; 78:31,34,47; 94:6; 101:8; 105:29; 135:10; 136:18; 139:19; Prov. 21:25; Eccl. 3:3; Isa. 14:20; 66:3; Jer. 20:17; 26:21; 38:9,16; Lam. 2:4,20-21; 3:43; Ezek. 7:16; 9:6; 13:19; 23:10,47; 33:27; Dan. 2:13,24; 3:22; 4:1; 6:24; 11:44; Hos. 2:3; 6:5; 9:16; Amos 2:3; 4:10; 9:1,4; Hab. 1:17;

**A report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort**- The word **report** (phasis from phemi = to speak) is used only here and means information. It was used as a legal term describing private information on crimes in progress -- there was definitely a work/crime in progress!

**Commander** (5506) (**chiliarchos** from **chikioi** = a thousand + **archo** = to rule) is transliterated as chiliarch, literally a commander of a thousand. is used to indicate the commander of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem (Acts 21:33), the captain of the temple guard (John 18:12), and in general any military commander or captain in command of a large number of troops (cf. Mk 6:21; Acts 21:31,37; Rev 6:15; 19:18). Utey adds that This would be the highest-ranking official in the Roman army (equestrian) who was stationed in Jerusalem during feast days when the population swelled to three times its normal number. His job was to keep order.

**Friberg** - in Roman military organization tribune, commander of a Roman cohort of about 600 soldiers; generally high-ranking officer, chief captain, equivalent to a major or colonel today.

**Chiliarchos** - commander(18), commanders(3), military commanders(1).

Mk. 6:21; Jn. 18:12; Acts 21:31; Acts 21:32; Acts 21:33; Acts 21:37; Acts 22:24; Acts 22:26; Acts 22:27; Acts 22:28; Acts 22:29; Acts 23:10; Acts 23:15; Acts 23:17; Acts 23:18; Acts 23:19; Acts 23:22; Acts 24:7; Acts 24:22; Acts 25:23; Rev. 6:15; Rev. 19:18

**Chiliarchos** in the **Septuagint** -

Exod. 18:21; Exod. 18:25; Num. 1:16; Num. 31:14; Num. 31:48; Num. 31:52; Num. 31:54; Deut. 1:15; Jos. 22:14; Jos. 22:21; 1 Sam. 8:12; 1 Sam. 18:13; 1 Sam. 22:7; 2 Sam. 18:1; 1 Chr. 13:1; 1 Chr. 15:25; 1 Chr. 26:26; 1 Chr. 27:1; 1 Chr. 29:6; 2 Chr. 1:2; 2 Chr. 17:14; 2 Chr. 25:5; Zech. 9:7; Zech. 12:5; Zech. 12:6;

**Robertson on the commander - Commander** of a thousand men or cohort (Mark 15:16). His name was Claudius Lysias.

**Came up** (305) (**anabaino** from **ana** = up, again, back + **basis** = a foot) means to go up, to ascend, cause to ascend from a lower to a higher place. It is used figuratively of information reaching or coming to the commander. However it also has a literal sense for the report would have likely been brought by someone coming up the stairs into the barracks or fortress. **Anabaino** may also have a literal meaning because during Jewish festivals the Roman guard was stationed in the [Antonia Fortress](#) which was located to allow one to see the Temple area. This area was approached by **stairs** (See [picture of the stairs](#)) which would have to be ascended. (Acts 21:35). The Roman soldiers lived in [Antonia Fortress](#), which overlooked the Temple Court. It was built by Herod the Great as a palace, but was used by the Romans as a military headquarters.

**Josephus on Tower of Antonia** - Now as to the tower of Antonia, it was situate at the corner of two cloisters of the court of the temple:<sup>21</sup> of that on the west, and that on the north. It was erected upon a rock of fifty cubits in height: and was on a great precipice. It was the work of King Herod.<sup>22</sup> Wherein he demonstrated his natural magnanimity. In the first place the rock itself was covered over with smooth pieces of stone, from its foundation; both for ornament; and that any one who would either try to get up, or to go down it, might not be able to hold his feet upon it. Next to this, and before you come to the edifice it self of the tower, there was a wall, three cubits high; but within that wall all the space of the tower of Antonia it self was built upon, to the height of forty cubits. The inward parts had the largeness and form of a palace. It being parted into all kinds of rooms, and other conveniencies; such as courts, and places for bathing, and broad spaces for camps: insomuch that by having all conveniencies that cities wanted, it might seem to be composed of several cities; but by its magnificence it seemed a palace. And as the intire structure resembled that of a tower, it contained also four other distinct towers, at its four corners. Whereof the others were but fifty cubits high: whereas that which lay upon the south east corner was seventy cubits high: that from thence the whole temple might be viewed. But on the corner, where it joined to the two cloisters of the temple, it had passages down to them both: through which the guards (for there always lay in this tower a Roman legion) went several ways among the cloisters, with their arms, on the Jewish festivals; in order to watch the people, that they might not there attempt to make any innovations. For the temple was a fortress, that guarded the city; as was the tower of Antonia a guard to the temple. And in that tower were the guards of those three (14). There was also a

peculiar fortress belonging to the upper city, which was Herod's palace. But for the hill Bezetha, it was divided from the tower of Antonia, as we have already told you.<sup>23</sup> And as that hill on which the tower of Antonia stood, was the highest of these three, so did it adjoin to the new city.<sup>24</sup> and was the only place that hindered the sight of the temple on the north. And this shall suffice at present to have spoken about the city, and the walls about it: because I have proposed to my self to make a more accurate description of it elsewhere.<sup>25</sup> ([Josephus Wars 5.5.8](#))

**Cohort** (4686)([speira](#) related to Latin *spira* = anything rolled up) was a Roman military technical term for the tenth part of a legion, normally containing 600 troops (Acts 10.1). **Speira** also could refer to a detachment of soldiers as in a troop, band or company (Jn 18.3) Robertson adds "Each legion had six tribunes and so each tribune (chiliarch) had a thousand if the cohort had its full quota."

**Wikipedia** - A **cohort** (from the Latin *cohors*, plural *cohortes*) was a standard tactical military unit of a Roman legion, though the standard changed with time and situation, and was composed of between 360-800 soldiers. A cohort is considered to be the equivalent of a modern military [battalion](#).

**Speira** - Matt. 27:27; Mk. 15:16; Jn. 18:3; Jn. 18:12; Acts 10:1+; Acts 21:31; Acts 27:1+ = "the Augustan cohort named Julius"

**That all Jerusalem was in confusion** (see above on [sugcheo](#) and [present tense](#) = continually in confusion) - Again don't miss the effect Paul's presence had on the city - **all Jerusalem!** Paul is an amazing man! One Jewish man filled with the Spirit and the Word was empowered to stir up an entire city!

**Acts 21:32 At once he took along some soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.**

KJV Acts 21:32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

- **At once he took along some soldiers and centurions** Acts 23:23,24
- **and ran down to them** Acts 23:27; 24:7
- **they stopped beating Paul** Acts 5:40; 18:17; 22:19; Isaiah 3:15
- [Watch video of Paul's arrest and speech before the crowd](#)
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ATTACKED RESTRAINED

**Restrain** means to limit, restrict, or keep under control, to limit the force, effect, development, or full exercise of in this case the brutal attack on Paul.

**Andrews** quips "the attack on Paul came to a screeching halt! It had started with an out of control mob and it had stopped with an in control army!" (Ibid)

**At once** (1824)(**exautes** from **ek** = from + **autos** = it, this) means at the very time, soon thereafter, instantly, from this time, forthwith, presently, immediately. **Louw-Nida** - "pertaining to an extremely short period of time between a previous state or event and a subsequent state or event - 'suddenly, at once, immediately'."

**Exautes** - 6v - immediately(2), moment(1), once(3). - Mk. 6:25; Acts 10:33; Acts 11:11; Acts 21:32; Acts 23:30; Phil. 2:23. Not in the Septuagint.

**He took along some soldiers and centurions and ran down to them** - "From the tower of Antonia, vivid scene." (Robertson) It was heavily garrisoned during feast days. This had the potential for a riot, something any Roman officer would not want to occur on his watch and get that black mark on his record. So he was motivated and did not just briskly walk down to confusion but ran down.

**John MacArthur said**, "Luke's use of the plural **centurions** suggests Lysias took two hundred soldiers or more, since a centurion commanded one hundred men."

**Centurions** (1543)([Hekatonarches](#) from **hekaton** = one hundred + **archo** = to command) means a commander of a hundred soldiers, a centurion, and would be our equivalent of an army captain or company commander. **Robertson** adds that the "Plural shows that Lysias the chiliarch (Acts 23:26+) took several hundred soldiers along (a centurion with each hundred. (Centurion - Latin



word centurio, commander of a century or hundred). The centurion commanded a company which varied from fifty to a hundred. Each cohort had six centuries. Each legion had ten cohorts or bands (Acts 10:1). The centurions mentioned in the N.T. all seem to be fine men as Polybius states that the best men in the army had this position."

**Took along** (3880)([paralambano](#)) means he took them to himself, taking the other soldiers along with him as he ran down.

**And when they saw the commander and the soldiers they stopped beating Paul** - The moment the Jewish mob saw the Roman authorities they stopped beating Paul lest they themselves incur charges from the Romans. **Beating** is in the [present tense](#) indicating this **beating** was continual. Recall that in Philippi Paul along with Silas had been struck "with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely." (Acts 16:23+) I am personally convicted -- how many times I am not willing to speak up for Jesus honor for fear that others might think contemptuously of me! Oh, that God would give each of us the Spirit empowered boldness of the apostle Paul to speak up for the Name above all names. Amen.

**They stopped** (3973)([pauo](#)) means to cease ([middle voice](#) = oneself speaks of personal involvement) from an activity in which one is engaged. The beating came to an abrupt end. Paul's life was spared for they would have eventually beaten him to death. Notice how God's sovereignty manifest itself in manifold ways - in this case His provision of pagan protectors assured that Paul would witness at Rome. The Lord Jesus Himself gave Paul this promise in Acts 23:11+ "But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."

**Beat** (strike, hit) (5180)([tupto/typto](#) from root "[tup--](#)" = a blow, cf [tupos](#) = a figure or print and English "type") means literally to smite, strike, beat or otherwise inflict a blow as when Paul was beaten in Acts (Acts 21:32, 23:2+). In Lk 18:13 the tax collector was beating his chest mourning over his sinful state, in stark contrast to the self-righteous Pharisee (Lk 18:10-12). Figuratively of wounding one's conscience (1 Cor 8:12).

**Robertson** - They stopped before the job was over because of the sudden onset of the Roman soldiers. Some ten years before in a riot at the passover the Roman guard marched down and in the panic several hundred were trampled to death.

**Frank Allen**: Paul was not only rescued from the mob but he was protected and finally transported by the Roman government to the very place where he had longed to go, to Rome. The people thought that Paul's plans were being defeated, and Paul was likely tempted to so believe at that time. But Paul left all his plans with God, was ready to submit to His will, and in the end he found that in this, as in other things, God's plan was best

**Acts 21:33 Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he began asking who he was and what he had done.**

KJV Acts 21:33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

- **ordered him to be bound with two chains** Acts 21:11; 12:6; 20:23; 22:25,29; 28:20; Judges 15:13; 16:8,12,21; Eph 6:20
- **he began asking who he was and what he had done** Acts 22:24; 25:16; John 18:29,30
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S INTERROGATION

**Interrogation** involves interviewing as commonly employed by law enforcement officers, military personnel, and intelligence agencies with the goal of eliciting useful information. Interrogation may involve a diverse array of techniques, ranging from developing a rapport with the subject to outright torture.

**Then the commander came up** (eggus - near) **and took hold of him** - **Took hold** is same verb used above in Acts 21:30 (see [epilambano](#))

**Commander** (5506) see above on [chiliarchos](#)

**Came up** (drew near) (1448)([eggizo](#)) means to approach, draw closer to, draw near, be near, come near. Used of the time drawing near in Acts 7:17; approaching Damascus in Acts 9:3; approaching the city in Acts 10:9; approaching Damascus in Acts 22:6; "we for our part are ready to slay him before he comes near the place." in Acts 23:15



**And ordered him to be bound with two chains** (like Peter when he was jailed by Herod - Acts 12:6+) - This could mean either hands and feet or between two Roman soldiers because as explained below they apparently thought Paul was an insurrectionist (Acts 21:38+). But why bind this little Jewish man with two chains? As we learn in Acts 21:38+, the commander, Claudius Lysias (Acts 23:26+) thought that Paul was an Egyptian rebel who was sought by the Romans for inciting revolt, which probably explains why he was bound. Recall Agabus' prophecy in Acts 21:11 "In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Of course it was not the Jews per se who bound him, but the Romans, but the [gist](#) of the prophecy was fulfilled.

**Ordered** (Commanded) ([2753](#))([keleuo](#)) means to set in motion, urge on. In the NT, used generally with the meaning of to command, order something to be done.

**And he began asking who he was and what he had done-** **Began asking** is in the [imperfect tense](#) indicating Claudius Lysias repeatedly asked "Who and what?" and was probably asking **the crowd** rather than Paul (cf next phrase in verse 35 "but among the crowd some were shouting one thing...") As noted below this verb **asking** implies a searching for facts or for truth specifically by asking questions. In short Lysias was not making a polite request but was carrying out a military interrogation!

**Asking** (ask)([4441](#))([punthanomai](#)) means to [inquire](#), ask, seek to learn usually from someone (Acts 4:7; Acts 10:18, 29; Acts 21:33; Acts 23:19-20). The word carries the sense of asking by inquiry, rather than asking by making a request to receive something.

**Acts 21:34 But among the crowd some were shouting one thing and some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks.**

KJV Acts 21:34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

- **some were shouting one thing and some another** Acts 19:32
- **when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar** Acts 22:30; 25:26
- **he ordered him to be brought into the barracks** Acts 21:37; 22:24; 23:10,16
- [Watch video of Paul's arrest and speech before the crowd](#)
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## CROWD CLAMORING

To clamor means to utter or proclaim insistently and noisily, often harshly or stridently. Clamor pictures insistent public expression as of support or protest, clearly protest in this case! The commander was attempting to get the facts from the crowd, but they were in a state of confusion and unable to tell him. An interesting observation is this - Where are the original trouble makers? They are certainly not making themselves obvious, perhaps because they knew they could not substantiate their accusations.

In the diagram the [Antonia Fortress](#) is circled in red and is to the Temple Complex positioned to allow the Roman soldiers to watch over the Temple area. The Fortress was originally called Baris by the Hasmoneans but renamed for Mark Antony by his friend Herod the Great.

**Andrews** comments "The crowd was united in their persecution of Paul, but they were divided in their purpose against Paul. The commander could not get to the truth. Some of the multitude said one thing while some said a totally different thing. Confusion reigned among the people." (Ibid)

**But among the crowd some were shouting one thing and some another-** Clearly this was another mob scene like we encountered in Ephesus in Acts 19:32 where "some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together."

This account parallels that in the riot in Ephesus in Acts 19 - "So then, **some were shouting one thing and some another**, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together." (Act 19:32+)

**Were shouting** (2019)(**epiphoneo** from **epi** - intensifies + **phoneo** = to cry) means they were crying out loudly. To shout or clamor (loud and persistent outcry from many people). Luke used this same verb of the Jewish crowd that "kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify Him!" (Lk 23:21+).

**And when he could not** (**dunamai**) **find out the facts because of the uproar**- "he could not know the certainty" (KJV) The mob was in a state of frenzy! Find out is ginosko meaning to come to know by experience. The crowd was so noisy, he was unable to get the facts.

**The facts** (804)(**aphales** from **a** = w/o + **sphallo** = throw down, trip up, totter, bring to the ground, make someone fall) literally means that which cannot be thrown down, tripped up, tottered or overthrown. **Aphales** is used figuratively in the present passage meaning that Lysias could not discover with certainty the facts of Paul's case and thus did not comprehend the reason for the tumult.

**Uproar** (2351)(**thorubos** from **threo** - to be troubled, disturbed) describes a noise, uproar, clamor, disturbance. It is a noisy tumult, a state of commotion and noise and confusion, with potential for a **riot**. Louw-Nida adds **thorubos** is "disorderly behavior of people in violent opposition to authority." In Mark 5:38 **thorubos** describes the noise produced by people wailing and mourning. The related verb **turbazo** is used in Lk 10:41+ of Jesus' description of Martha's mind as "**bothered**" - she had both inward anxiety and outward agitation. Matthew used **thorubos** to describe the disturbance that took place during Pilate's trial of Jesus (Matt. 27:24). Luke used it in Acts 20:1+ to describe the end of the Ephesian mob - "After the uproar had ceased." In all three instances the word describes an uncontrollable, hysterical mob. Luke's last use is Acts 24:18+ where Paul alludes to the event here in Acts 21.

**He ordered him to be brought into the barracks** - So were about to take Paul into the **Antonia Fortress** on Lysias' orders, where he would be able to hear.

**Ordered** (2753) see **keleuo**

**Barracks** (2925a)(**parembolē** from **para** = from beside, by the side of + **emballo** = throw) means something thrown beside something else and as a military technical term expressing a method of drawing up the troops as in preparation for battle (Heb 11:34). It came to mean a military encampment and as a standing camp took on the idea of military quarters or barracks. The KJV translates it in the present passage as "castle" and in this context **parembolē** referred to the **Antonia Fortress** next to the Temple as shown in the picture above. **Parembolē** was also used to refer to the encampments of the Israelites in the desert (Heb. 13:11, 13 [cf. Lev. 4:12, 21; 16:27]; 1Sa 4:5, 6; 2 Ki 7:5, 7). In Rev 20:9 **parembolē** pictures the saints of every age encamped around "the beloved city" of Jerusalem, the location of Messiah's throne and center of His millennial reign (cf. Isa. 24:23; Zech. 14:9-11).

**Gilbrant - Classical Greek** uses **parembolē** in varied ways. Primarily it denotes something enclosed, encircled, or fortified. In military contexts it is used of a fortified camp (Liddell-Scott). In grammar it refers to an insertion or a matter enclosed in parentheses, something enclosed by, but not native to, the current argument (ibid.). The **Septuagint** translates **machāneh** with **parembolē**, where it often refers to the structured camp of Israel during the Exodus and the years in the wilderness. The word is also used of organized battle arrays, as Sisera's army in Judges 4:16 and of the Philistines in 1 Samuel 14:16. The **New Testament** uses **parembolē** literally to refer to the Roman fortress of Antonia in Jerusalem that was attached to the temple (Acts 21:34). Other Roman outposts are also noted in Acts. The word is used negatively in a figurative sense of Jerusalem in Heb 13:11,13 as the camp outside which Jesus was crucified. Hence, the city is not viewed as an eternal city but as a temporary camp walled against Him and outside of which Christians must stand. Positively, it is used of the saints and the beloved city who are walled up and under a final but futile attack by Satan (Rev 20:9). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Parembolē** - 10x - armies(1), barracks(6), camp(3).

Acts 21:34; Acts 21:37; Acts 22:24; Acts 23:10; Acts 23:16; Acts 23:32; Heb. 11:34; Heb. 13:11; Heb. 13:13; Rev. 20:9

**Parembolē** is common in the Septuagint -

Ge 32:1-2,7-8,10,21; 33:8; 50:9; Exod. 14:19-20,24; 16:13; 17:1; 19:16-17; 29:14; 32:17,19,26-27; 33:7-8,11; 36:6; Lev. 4:12,21; 6:11; 8:17; 9:11; 10:4-5; 13:46; 14:3,8; 16:26-28; 17:3; 24:10,14,23; Num. 2:3,9-10,16-18,24-25,31-32; 4:5,15; 5:2-4; 10:2,5-6,14,18,22,25,34; 11:1,9,26-27,30-32; 12:14-15; 14:44-45; 15:36; 16:46; 19:3,7,9; 31:12-13,19,24; Deut. 2:14-15; 23:10-12,14; 29:11; Jos. 1:11; 3:2; 4:8; 5:8; 6:11,14,18,23; 7:22; 8:22; 9:6; 10:6; Jdg. 4:15-16; 7:1,8-11,13-15,17-19,21-22; 8:10-12; 13:25; 18:12; 21:8,12; 1 Sam. 4:3,5-7,16; 11:11; 14:15-16,19,21; 17:1,46,53; 26:6; 28:1,5,19; 29:1,4,6; 2 Sam. 1:2-3; 2:8,29; 23:16; 1 Ki. 2:8,35; 16:15-16; 2 Ki. 3:9,24; 5:15; 6:24; 7:4ff,10,12,16; 19:35; 1 Chr. 9:18-19; 11:15,18; 14:15-16; 2 Chr. 32:21; Ps. 27:3; 78:28; 106:16; Song. 6:13; Isa. 8:8; 21:8; 37:36; Ezek. 4:2; 43:2; Joel 2:11; Amos 4:10; Zech. 14:15

KJV Acts 21:35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

- **because of the violence of the mob** Genesis 6:11,12; Ps 55:9; 58:2; Jer 23:10; Habakkuk 1:2,3
- [Watch video of Paul's arrest and speech before the crowd](#)
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOB CONTROL

**When he got to the stairs** - Observe the stairs leading up to the Antonia Fortress in the picture above and alluded to in Acts 21:32. This may not be exactly as it was in Paul's day for some say there were 2 sets of stairs and one set from the fortress led directly down to the outer (Gentile) court.

**He was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob** - After a football victory, the one who kicked the winning field goal is carried on the shoulders of all the players. That is not exactly the picture but it is possible the soldiers lifted him up and transported him above the mob that wanted to kill him.

**Carried** (941) ([bastazo](#) from **basis** = foot) generally means to take up and hold (Jn 10:31, 20:15, Acts 21:35) or to bear (Mt 3:11, Mk 14:13, Lk 22:10). The meaning common in classic Greek of "to pick up" (Jn 10:31), carry (Jn 19:17),

**Violence** (970) (**bia**) means strength, force (of waves Acts 27:41), impetus, violence, violent force. **Louw-Nida** = "strong, destructive force." BDAG - "strength or energy brought to bear in varying degrees on things or persons." The word **biyya** as employed in midrashic literature generally denotes an act of violence, force, or grave injustice, according to the connotation of the Greek word **Bia**.

**Gilbrant** - **Bia** is associated with action that is of a violent nature. The Septuagint uses it in describing how the Egyptians "compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously...all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them." (Exodus 1:13,14). It is used in the New Testament to describe the "violence of the waves" breaking up the ship on which Paul was a passenger (Acts 27:41), as well as the force used against the disciples (Acts 5:26; 21:35; 24:7). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**NIDNTT** - The noun **βία** is common already in Homer, where it occurs (in the form βίη) over 100x, primarily with the meaning "(physical) strength" (esp. in personified expressions such as βίη ρακλῆειν, "the strength of Hercules" = "mighty Hercules," e.g., Il. 11.690). Also freq. in Homer, however, is the extended sense "force, violent act, violence" (esp. pl., e.g., 16.213 [βίας νέμων, "force of the winds"]; Od. 16.189 [πάσχεις λγέα πολλά, βίας ποδῆγμενος νδρ ν, "you suffer many painful things, bearing the violence of men"]). This second meaning becomes standard in the class. period; e.g., Plato uses the phrase πρ ς βίαν, "under compulsion," opp. κών, "voluntarily" (Phaedr. 236d). The derived vbs. βιάω and βιάζω, both meaning "to constrain," also are found in Homer; the latter becomes much more common, esp. in the mid. voice, with such nuances as "overpower, force (someone to do something), do violence to," etc. The adj. βίαιος (rarely βιαστικός) means "forcible, violent." Many other derivatives are attested, such as βίαστος ("unforced"), ποβιάζομαι ("to force away"), παμβίας ("all-subduing"), περβιάζομαι ("to press exceedingly"), etc.

**Bia** - 4x - force(1), violence(3). - Acts 5:26; Acts 21:35; Acts 24:7; Acts 27:41

Acts 5:26 (Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without **violence** (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned).

Acts 24:7 "But Lysias the commander came along, and with much **violence** took him out of our hands,

Acts 27:41 But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern began to be broken up by the **force** of the waves.

**Bia** in the Septuagint -

Exod. 1:13; Exod. 1:14; Exod. 14:25; Neh. 5:14; Neh. 5:15; Neh. 5:18; Isa. 17:13; Isa. 28:2; Isa. 30:30; Isa. 52:4; Isa. 63:1; Ezek. 44:18; Dan. 11:17; Hab. 3:6;

KJV Acts 21:36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

- Acts 7:54; 22:22; Luke 23:18; John 19:15; 1 Cor 4:13
- [Watch video of Paul's arrest and speech before the crowd](#)
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DEJA VU "AWAY WITH THIS MAN"

**Deja vu** is a French term describing the feeling that one has lived through the present situation before. The phrase translates literally as "already seen." Luke described a similar cry from the Jewish crowd in Lk 23:18+ "But they cried out all together, saying, **"Away with this man,** and release for us Barabbas!"

**MacArthur** paints the picture - In mindless, faceless fury, losing all sense of fear for Roman soldiers, the crowd pushed and shoved, trying desperately to get at him.

**For the multitude of the people kept following** ([akoloutheo](#)) **them, shouting, "Away with him!"** - **Following** is in the [imperfect tense](#), which pictures this mob ["hot on their heels"](#) following closely because they wanted to get their hands on Paul again (cf "he should not be allowed to live" in Acts 22:22). **Shouting** is in the [present tense](#) indicating this was a continual [din](#), or loud discordant noise, which made it difficult to hear anything. One can picture this rabid mob yelling and screaming.

**Shouting** (2896)([krazo](#)) refers to a loud cry or vociferation, and is a strong word expressing deep emotion. **Krazo** is one of those [onomatopoeic](#) words, the very pronunciation of which imitates the hoarse cry of the raven ([listen](#)), and can be an inarticulate and brutish sound or an exclamation of fear or pain. Abbott-Smith says "generally used of inarticulate cries, *to scream, cry out* (Aesch., etc.)." It is used of the cry of an animal, the barking of a dog and two men in a quarrel, trying to bawl each other down (Aristophanes, Knights, 1017)"

**Away with him** - The [present imperative](#) indicates they were continually shouting commands at the commander! In Acts 22:22 after Paul finished his "sermon" - "They listened to him up to this statement, and then they raised their voices and said, **"Away with such a fellow from the earth,** for he should not be allowed to live!" **Utley** point out that "There are many parallels between the treatment of Paul and Jesus by the Jews and Romans." In John 19:15 the Jews "cried out, **"Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!"** Pilate \*said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar.""

**Away** (142)([airo](#)) literally means to lift up something and to carry it. In the present context, the Jews were not simply asking for Paul to be taken away from the Temple but ultimately to be deprived of his life (just as the parallel use with Jesus where the context clearly indicates their desire for his death - read Lk 23:18+ and Jn 19:15 which both use this same verb [airo](#) -- in John 19:15 the verb is not [present imperative](#) but [aorist imperative](#) calling for immediate, urgent response).

**Robertson** adds "Cheated of their purpose to lynch Paul, they were determined to have his blood....He (Paul) was learning what it was to share the sufferings of Christ as the sullen roar of the mob's yells rolled on and on in his ears."

**Jack Andrews** - Paul had gotten in a mess, but the Lord had not forsaken him and the Lord would use him. He stayed faithful to the Lord when things went from bad to worse! You may be here today and think that things cannot possibly get any worse! You may feel like your world is caving in—that you are being maligned and falsely accused. You make be persecuted for your faith and turn on by your friends—trust the Lord and use these opportunities to testify of the Lord Jesus and His work in your life. Call upon the Lord today and turn to Him today! Turn to the Lord in the midst of difficult circumstances! Trust in the Lord before, in, and through every tough time. Pray to the Lord today and seek the Lord for deliverance. God has called us to serve Him in good times and bad times. God has called us to honor Him when we are on the mountain top or when we are in the valley. God has called us to love Him when things go from bad to worse! Look up to the Lord today and wait on the Lord! (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts)

Acts 21:37 As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek?"

KJV Acts 21:37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto

thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

- Acts 21:19; 19:30; Mt 10:18-20; Luke 21:15
- [Watch video of Paul's arrest and speech before the crowd](#)
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S ABILITY TO SPEAK GREEK ARRESTS HIS ARRESTOR'S ATTENTION

**As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander-** The verb for **was about** is **mello** which means to be about to or to be at the point of happening, in this case Paul's entrance into the fortress. But Paul, surely filled with the Spirit (boldness - cf Acts 4:31+) and a "[carpe diem](#)" mentality grabbed this golden opportunity to speak. Given the fact that this was in the middle of the Pentecost festival with Jews from all over the land and now the fact that Paul even had an elevated "podium" from which he might deliver his message, we can better understand his charge to the Ephesians to redeem the time or make the most of the time ([kairos](#)) (Eph 5:16+). Paul was going to make the most of this opportunity! Beloved, are you imitating Paul (a command - 1 Cor 11:1+), redeeming the precious moments? As Jesus said we must work while it is day, for night cometh when no man can work. (John 9:4)

**Pulpit Commentary** - The heathen, notwithstanding his ignorance, was more open to reason than the Jew, blinded by fanaticism and bigotry. Religion corrupted by priestcraft is worse than skepticism. Courtesy and chivalry may be made to serve higher purposes. The providential appointment of the history of Judaism opened the way for a free gospel. Jews were filling up their cup.

**Robertson** adds that "The calm self-control (**ED**: cf Source of self-control in Gal 5:22-23+) of Paul in the presence of this mob is amazing. His courteous request to Lysias was in Greek to the chiliarch's amazement.

**May I say something to you?** - Luke uses an [idiom](#) here which literally reads "Is it permitted for me to say."

**May** (permitted)([1832](#))([exesti](#) from from **ek** = out + **eimi** = to be) is an impersonal verb, signifying "it is permitted, it is lawful" (or interrogatively, "is it lawful?").

**And he said, "Do you know Greek?"** - In other words, "Do you understand the Greek language?" His question expects a positive response. The commander was surprised to hear Paul speak excellent Greek for he had thought him to be an Egyptian insurrectionist Jew.

**Bible Background Commentary** - In the eastern part of the empire, Latin was confined to use in the military and in documents concerning Roman citizens. The public administration of Syria-Palestine used Greek, which was also the first language of the Jerusalem aristocracy, and most Jewish people in Palestine knew at least some Greek. The "**tribune**" (NRSV) or "**commander**" assumes that Paul is a particular troublemaker (Acts 21:38); most rabble-rousers he would know would have spoken Aramaic by choice. But most Egyptian business documents of this period were in Greek, which seems to have been the main language there; he thus should not be surprised that one he supposes to be an Egyptian speaks Greek. **The point is not that Paul speaks Greek; it is that he speaks it without an accent, like someone educated and fluent in the language, which the tribune assumes the Egyptian Jew who had caused problems would not be.** (The IVP Bible Background Commentary – New Testament)

**Uttley** - The Colonel was surprised that Paul spoke Koine Greek because he apparently thought that Paul was an Egyptian insurrectionist that he had heard about (cf. v. 38 and [Josephus' Antiquities 20:8:6, 10](#)). This Egyptian rebellion occurred between A.D. 52–57.

**Acts 21:38 "Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?"**

KJV Acts 21:38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

- **Then you are not the Egyptian** Acts 5:36,37; Mt 5:11; 1 Cor 4:13
- [Watch video of Paul's arrest and speech before the crowd](#)
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## STIRRING UP



## SEDITION

Sedition describes an illegal action inciting resistance to lawful authority and tending to cause the disruption or overthrow of the government.

**Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?"** - This question expects a positive answer. The Egyptian mentioned was a Jew who proclaimed himself a prophet and gathered a large following with the intent to lead them to the Mount of Olives, where, at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would collapse. His force was attacked by Felix but the Egyptian himself escaped.

**Josephus Antiquities of the Jews, 20.167-172** records - These works, that were done by the robbers, filled the city with all sorts of impiety. And now these impostors and deceivers persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness, 169 Moreover, there came out of Egypt about this time to Jerusalem one that said he was a prophet, and advised the multitude of the common people to go along with him to the Mount of Olives, as it was called, which lay over against the city, and at the distance of five furlongs. 170 He said further, that he would show them from hence how, at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down; and he promised them that he would procure them an entrance into the city through those walls, when they were fallen down. 171 Now when Felix was informed of these things, he ordered his soldiers to take their weapons, and came against them with a great number of horsemen and footmen from Jerusalem, and attacked the Egyptian and the people that were with him. He also slew four hundred of them, and took two hundred alive. 172 But the Egyptian himself escaped out of the fight, but did not appear any more. And again the robbers stirred up the people to make war with the Romans, and said they ought not to obey them at all; and when any persons would not comply with them, they set fire to their villages, and plundered them.

**Stirred up a revolt** (387)([anastatoo](#) from **anistemi** = to stand up) means to disturb, disquiet, upset, trouble, cause a revolt, instigate an uprising, to stir up sedition. Used in a letter of a bad little boy whose mother said, "He drives me mad." The picture is of agitating or stirring up, provoking one to rise up in excitement. The action is most commonly applied to a state of mind as is the case in the papyri of the Koine Greek period.

**Keener** has an interesting note that "Most of the messianic-prophetic figures reported in this period gained followings in the "wilderness" ("desert"—NIV), perhaps expecting deliverance to come like a new exodus under a new Moses....A few years after this encounter they kidnapped people to secure the release of their own adherents held by the procurator. Josephus's final reports of them are at the fortress [Masada](#) ([picture](#)), where they finally perished in a.d. 73." (The IVP Bible Background Commentary – New Testament)

**Assassins** ("dagger men")(4607)(**sikarios** from Latin - **sica** = curved dagger, **sicarius** = dagger carrier) means an assassin or murderer, real **cutthroats**! The Sicarii were a fanatical group of Jewish nationalists called [Zealots](#) who used murder and assassination to achieve their goals (cf Lk 6:15+; Acts 1:13+). They appeared during the Jewish war (A.D. 66–70). Josephus noted that these men committed murders in broad daylight, especially at festivals, especially brutally stabbing to death aristocrats (especially Jews who collaborated with the Romans) in the midst of crowds in the Temple, then slipping away unseen. These radical assassins opposed the Romans and armed with short daggers (sica) under their cloaks, mingled with the crowd, striking down their opponents, and then pretending to call for help. One could not even trust a friend.

**Josephus Wars of the Jews 2.13.3** on **Sicarii** - When the country was purged of these, there sprang up another sort of robbers in Jerusalem, which were called *Sicarii*, who slew men in the day time, and in the midst of the city: this they did chiefly at the festivals, when they mingled themselves among the multitude, and concealed daggers under their garments, with which they stabbed those that were their enemies; and when any fell down dead, the murderers became a part of those that had indignation against them, by which means they appeared persons of such reputation, that they could by no means be discovered. The first man who was slain by them was Jonathan the high priest, after whose death many were slain every day, while the fear men were in of being so served was more afflicting than the calamity itself, and while every body expected death every hour, as men do in war, so men were obliged to look before them, and to take notice of their enemies at a great distance; nor, if their friends were coming to them, durst they trust them any longer; but, in the midst of their suspicions and guarding of themselves, they were slain. Such was the celerity of the plotters against them, and so cunning was their contrivance.

**Frank Allen** on the mistaken identity of Paul as the Egyptian - An Egyptian who had claimed to be the Messiah had led a rough band of about four thousand men out into the wilderness and there had gathered about him about thirty thousand with the aid of whom he had threatened the Roman garrison in Jerusalem. The band was defeated and dispersed but their leader had escaped and it was feared that he might appear again. Moreover, the cruel conduct of Felix, who was the Roman procurator at this time, had



driven the Jews almost to the point of insurrection. As a consequence the Roman captain, Lysias, his officers and men, were keeping a vigilant guard, on this occasion, when there were many thousands of Jews in and about Jerusalem, lest trouble should again arise. From the tower of Antonia at the northwest corner of the temple, and overlooking the place of worship, the sentinel could discover any disorder at once and the soldiers could be dispatched to quell a riot in a moment's time.

**Acts 21:39 But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people."**

KJV Acts 21:39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

- **I am a Jew** Acts 9:11,30; 22:3; 23:34
- **of Tarsus in Cilicia** Acts 6:9; 15:23,41
- **a citizen of no insignificant city** Acts 16:37; 22:25-29; 23:27
- **I beg you, allow me to speak to the people** Acts 21:37; 1 Peter 3:15; 4:15,16
- [Watch video of Paul's arrest and speech before the crowd](#)
- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### PAUL PLAYS TRUMP CARD HIS CITIZENSHIP

To "[play a trump card](#)" is an [idiom](#) that means to use a particular stratagem or resource that gives one an "advantage," often being held until the opportune time. And this was the opportune time for him to give a bold testimony explaining the transforming work that the Messiah had done in his heart.

**THOUGHT** - O to have the sensitivity of Paul, to be able to discern when God is at work around us (He's always at work!) and to have the spiritual eyes to see the "divine opportunities" He places before us! In Jesus' Name. Amen! If you have never studied the course "**Experiencing God**," (see below to get a "taste" of this classic study) I can personally attest to the impact it had on myself, my wife and another couple that did it with us. None of us have ever been quite the same...and that was about 29 years ago! The "pond is still rippling" some 30 years later!

#### Related Resources:

- [God is Always at Work Around You](#)
- [This resource takes you through the entire first of 7 realities](#) (and then you can watch the video).
- [Watch Henry Blackaby's discussion of this first of 7 realities](#)

**But Paul said, "I am** (ego men eimi) **a Jew** (*loudaios*) **of Tarsus in Cilicia** **a citizen of no insignificant city** - Paul for the moment did not reveal that he was Roman citizen but a citizen of a well-known city. In the phrase **no insignificant city** we see Luke's use of understatement (and also a double negative) or [litotes](#), a figure of speech in which understatement is used to emphasize a point by stating a negative (no insignificant) to further affirm a positive -- Tarsus is a significant city, in fact one of the great cities of the Roman empire.

**T. De Witt Talmage** - Caesar boasted of his native Rome; Lycurgus of Sparta; Virgil of Andes; Demosthenes of Athens; Archimedes of Syracuse; and Paul of Tarsus. I should suspect a man of base heartedness who had no feeling of complacency in regard to the place of his residence; who gloried not in its arts, behaviour, prosperity, embellishments, and its scientific attainments. Men never like a place where they have not behaved well. Swarthout did not like New York; nor Dr. Webster, Boston. Men who have free rides in prison vans never like the city that furnishes the vehicle. When I see in history Argos, Rhodes, Smyrna, Chios, Colophon, and several other cities claiming Homer, I conclude that Homer behaved well.

**Citizen** ([4177](#)) (**polites** from **polis** = city) defines an individual who has full status, the rights guaranteed to those who held citizenship and that is especially the sense in Acts 21:39. The uses in the Gospels refer to merely inhabitants of a city (Lk 15:15+) and to fellow citizens in Lk 19:14+.

**Uteley** observes that Paul was asserting "his citizenship in a world-class university town. Previously in Roman governmental administration a person could not be a citizen of a non-Roman city and also a Roman city, but by Paul's time this had changed. The

text does not say if the Roman officer was impressed."

**Robertson** quips that "It was a strange request and a daring one, to wish to speak to this mob howling for Paul's blood." While that is certainly true, we need to remember that Paul is undoubtedly being guided by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:18<sup>+</sup>, cf Ro 8:14<sup>+</sup>).

**Alexander Maclaren** wrote, "Though bruised and hustled, and having but a minute or two beforehand looked death in the face, he is ready to seize the opportunity to speak a word for his Master... There is nothing more striking in Paul's character than his self-command and composure in all circumstances. This ship could rise to any wave, and ride in any storm... It is not easy to disturb a man who counts not his life dear if only he may complete his course... If God is our rock and our high tower we shall not be moved."

**And I beg you, allow me to speak to the people**- Paul is asking to speak to a mob that a few minutes earlier had sought to kill him. His polite approach reminds me of Daniel in Daniel 1:9<sup>+</sup> when "Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself."

**Beg** ([beseech](#), [implore](#)) ([present tense](#))(1189)([deomai](#) from **deo** = to bind) means to ask for something with a sense of pleading, [beseeching](#) or begging, and often with a sense of urgency regarding a presumed need. Thus **deomai** is a strong way to ask for something. The following uses give you a sense of the earnestness of Paul's plea -- The leper seeing Jesus "fell on his face and **implored** ([deomai](#)) Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." (Lk 5:12). The desperate father cries out to Jesus to cast a demon out of his son "Teacher, I **beg** ([deomai](#)) You to look at my son, for he is my only boy." (Lk 9:38).

**Luke's** uses of **deomai** -

Lk. 5:12; Lk. 8:28; Lk. 8:38; Lk. 9:38; Lk. 9:40; Lk. 10:2; Lk. 21:36; Lk. 22:32; Acts 4:31; Acts 8:22; Acts 8:24; Acts 8:34; Acts 10:2; Acts 21:39; Acts 26:3;

**Allow** (give me permission)(2010)([epitrepo](#) from **epi** = upon + **trepo** = to turn) means to turn to, entrust, hence to permit and to to allow someone to do something.

**Jack Andrews** - Paul took advantage of every opportunity to share Jesus!**Statistics:** According to Ken Hemphill in his book "[The Antioch Effect: 8 Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches](#)" only 28% of American adults believe they have a responsibility to share their religious beliefs. 25% feel strongly that they have no such responsibility. In addition, 64% of American adults believe all religions pray to the same God. Evangelism is in a deeper recession than then economy. Thank God someone that shared Jesus Christ with us took advantage of their opportunity to share their faith! Billy Graham once said, "Every generation is strategic. We are not responsible for the past generation, and we cannot bear full responsibility for the next one; but we do have our generation. God will hold us responsible as to how well we fulfill our responsibilities to this age and take advantage of our opportunities." Are we taking advantage of every opportunity? Are we easily intimidated and discouraged away from sharing the message of the gospel with others? Do we seize every opportunity to show the love of Jesus to others? Do we take advantage of every opportunity to share the message of Jesus with others? Paul was faithful to his Lord no matter what the circumstances were. He sought to honor the Lord and share the message of salvation. (Ibid)

**Acts 21:40 When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,**

KJV Acts 21:40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

NET Acts 21:40 When the commanding officer had given him permission, Paul stood on the steps and gestured to the people with his hand. When they had become silent, he addressed them in Aramaic,

NLT Acts 21:40 The commander agreed, so Paul stood on the stairs and motioned to the people to be quiet. Soon a deep silence enveloped the crowd, and he addressed them in their own language, Aramaic.

NIV Acts 21:40 Having received the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic:

Young's Literal Acts 21:40 And he having given him leave, Paul having stood upon the stairs, did beckon with the hand to the people, and there having been a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew dialect, saying:

- **Paul, standing on the stairs** Acts 21:35; 2 Kings 9:13

- **motioned to the people with his hand** Acts 12:17; 13:16; 19:33
- **when there was a great hush** Acts 22:2
- **he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect** Acts 6:1; 26:14; Luke 23:38; John 5:2; 19:13,17,20; Rev 9:11; 16:16
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- [Acts 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL TAKES CENTER STAGE

The idiomatic phrase "[take center stage](#)" means to become the main focus, to become the most significant or noticeable person in the scene. That is an apt description of Paul standing and preparing to speak with all eyes focused on him (and undoubtedly "[shooting daggers](#)!" so to speak = glaring at him very angrily, spitefully, and disdainfully!) No pressure Paul!

**Jack Andrews** - Paul was more concerned about the spiritual condition of the people than he was about the physical condition of himself. Are we concerned about the spiritual condition of those in the world? Are we concerned about the lost who hate us, persecute us, and would seek to harm us? (Ibid)

**MacArthur** has a suggestion on why Paul received permission to speak - Hoping to calm the explosive situation and discover what had triggered it, Lysias consented. (Ibid)

**When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs**- Claudius Lysias gave permission and undoubtedly still wanted to know what this was all about! Picture Paul, beaten, bruised and in chains and still desiring to speak to the very ones who had just beaten him! One is reminded of his zeal for his fellow Jews who still not yet believers in Messiah writing in Romans 9

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For **I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren**, my kinsmen according to the flesh, (Ro 9:1-3+)

**Robertson** paints the scene for us - Dramatic scene. Paul had faced many audiences and crowds, but never one quite like this. Most men would have feared to speak, but not so Paul. He will speak about himself only as it gives him a chance to put Christ before this angry Jewish mob who look on Paul as a renegade Jew, a turncoat, a deserter, who went back on Gamaliel and all the traditions of his people, who not only turned from Judaism to Christianity, but who went after Gentiles and treated Gentiles as if they were on a par with Jews. Paul knows only too well what this mob thinks of him

**Motioned to the people with his hand** - He shook down to the multitude with the hand. We've seen this hand motion several times in Acts - Acts 12:17+; Acts 13:16+; Acts 19:33+.

**J Roberts** - Paul's object was to gain silence. The man who has to address a noisy crowd does not begin by howling out "Silence!" that would be an affront, but he lifts up his hand to its extreme height, and begins to beckon with it, i.e., to move it backward and forward; and then the people say to each other "Pasathe, pasathe (Be silent, be silent)".

**Motioned** (2678) (**Kataseio** from **kata** = down + **seio** = to move, shake) means to signal (with the hand), shaking violently to and fro, moving backward and forward, waving the hand, beckoning as a signal for silence and attention.

**And when there was a great hush** - Now this is an amazing statement! Rabble rousers silenced in a moment!

**Hush** (4602) (**sigē**) means the absence of noise. Gilbrant adds "In the classical period the term was used both as a noun and as an adverb. As a noun it generally meant "silence." As an adverb it could mean "silently" or "quietly, secretly." In the Septuagint the term occurs only twice, both times in the apocryphal books (Wisdom 18:14; 3 Maccabees 3:23). In both references sigē means "silence." The only other NT use is in Rev 8:1+ "When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was **silence** in heaven for about half an hour." Recall that this seal led into the next set of trumpet judgments.

**He spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying** - Note other translations have "**Aramaic**" which is an "interpretation" for the literal Greek reads "**Hebrew dialect**." (NET, NIV, NLT). It is generally agreed that the language spoken in Palestine in the time of Christ was not Hebrew but "Aramaic", a sister Semitic "dialect." The Jews had learned to speak Aramaic during their years under Persian rule. And so the mob quieted the mob for a period (cf. Acts 22:2).

**Spoke** (addressed) (4377) (**prosphoneo** from **pros** = to + **phoneo** = to call) means to utter sounds toward someone and then to speak out, call out or address. **Vincent** adds an interesting note this verb is always used in the NT "in the sense of to [accost](#) (cf Acts 21:40; Acts 22:2), whether an individual or a crowd." Louw-Nida adds that **prosphoneo** means "to address an audience, with possible emphasis upon loudness.

All uses of **prosphoneo** - Matt. 11:16; Lk. 6:13; Lk. 7:32; Lk. 13:12; Lk. 23:20; Acts 21:40; Acts 22:2

Ancillary Notes on Aramaic...

**Aramaic** is a language or group of languages belonging to the Semitic subfamily of the Afroasiatic language family. More specifically, it is part of the Northwest Semitic group, which also includes the Canaanite languages such as Hebrew and Phoenician. The Aramaic alphabet was widely adopted for other languages and is ancestral to the Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic alphabets. During its approximately 3,100 years of written history,[3] Aramaic has served variously as a language of administration of empires, as a language of divine worship and religious study, and as the spoken tongue of a number of Semitic peoples from the Near East.

**Language of Jesus** - It is generally agreed by historians that Jesus and his disciples primarily spoke **Aramaic** (**Jewish Palestinian Aramaic**), the common language of Judea in the first century AD, most likely a **Galilean dialect** distinguishable from that of Jerusalem.<sup>[1]</sup> The villages of Nazareth and Capernaum in Galilee, where Jesus spent most of his time, were Aramaic-speaking communities.<sup>[2]</sup> It is also likely that Jesus knew enough **Koine Greek** to converse with those not native to Palestine, and it is also possible that Jesus knew some Hebrew for religious purposes. (ED: Obviously this secular note from Wikipedia does not recognize that Jesus could have spoken Mayan if that had been necessary!)

**Robertson** agrees that the **Hebrew dialect** was "The Aramaean which the people in Jerusalem knew better than the Greek. Paul could use either tongue at will. His enemies had said in Corinth that "his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. 10:10). But surely even they would have to admit that Paul's stature and words reach heroic proportions on this occasion. Self-possessed (ED: "Spirit possessed" in my opinion would be more accurate!) with majestic poise Paul faces the outraged mob beneath the stairs.

**Hebrew** (1446) (**Hebrais**) refers to the Hebrew language; not that however in which the OT was written. "The three New Testament occurrences of Hebraios bring in a new distinction among the Jews by setting "Hebrews" in contrast to "Hellenists." The Hebrews retained Hebrew (that is, Aramaic) as their mother tongue and maintained a more distinctive Jewish culture. The distinction showed itself early in the Jerusalem church when Hellenists murmured against Hebrews, because widows among the Hellenists had been overlooked in the Christians' welfare ministry (Acts 6:1)." (Gilbrant)

Here are the other two uses of **Hebrais** in the NT...

Acts 22:2+ And when they heard that he was addressing them in the **Hebrew** dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said,

Acts 26:14+ "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the **Hebrew** dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

**Gilbrant** adds that "**Hebrais** is one of four New Testament words with the base Hebra-, all translated "Hebrew": (1) Hebraikos (1438), an adjective meaning "Hebrew/Aramaic" (language); (2) Hebrais, a noun with the same meaning; (3) Hebraisti, an adverb for "in Hebrew/ Aramaic"; and (4) Hebraios, a noun referring to a Hebrew person. Hebra-ios transliterates the Hebrew base and adds different endings to indicate case usage and to form related words." ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Dialect** (language) (1258) (**dialektos** from **dialogomai** = to dispute, discourse, reason) usually refers to the specific **dialect** of a region or special district within a nation, speaking of the the form of speech characteristic of a nation or region (I am from Texas and have a definite Texas twang or "dialect"). **Dialektos** can refer to the language of a country or nation but **glossa** is used more often for language (as in Acts 2:4, 11)

**Dialektos** - 6x in 6v - dialect(3), language(3). Acts 1:19; Acts 2:6; Acts 2:8; Acts 21:40; Acts 22:2; Acts 26:14 Twice in **Septuagint** - Esther 9:26, Da 1:4 = "language of the Chaldeans"

**Dennis Allen**: Exhortation about the proper use of technology – This was the conclusion of the 3rd missionary journey – took 5 years; traveled over 2500 miles; made use of the Roman system of roads that involved a certain level of engineering and sophistication as well as transportation by boat over many miles; look at how quickly the church grew in these first 25 years after Christ; don't be afraid of new technology – just use it for good purposes; look at how God used the printing press – Bible was first book printed