

ACTS 19: 21 – 21:15 PROPHECY – PROHIBITION OR WARNING?

When we left off, we saw how the Holy Spirit, through Paul was working “unusual” miracles. We talked about why God was doing this, as an answer to the dark malevolent powers that ran amok in Ephesus. Remember, Ephesus was the epicenter for this sort of thing, being that it was the home to the temple of Diana of the Ephesians. God met the demonic stronghold with an overwhelming show of force through these miracles. The kingdom was growing. People were turning from their paganism, even to the point of burning their expensive books of incantations. And as we will see today, this made a lot of waves in the city, especially as it effected the local economy. But beyond that, we will see Paul’s mood change as he comes to terms with another reality that has apparently been looming large in his mind. We have a great deal of scripture to read before we get to where we will focus – so let’s get to it, shall we?

21 When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed

through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." 22 So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

Paul has two places he needs to go; one is Jerusalem and the other is Rome.

Why Jerusalem? To deliver the love offering. Remember this.

Why Rome? In order to carry the Gospel of the Kingdom to the capital of the world he knew.

(Northern arm of the table of nations.)

Paul stayed in Western Turkey for a time, Timothy and Erastus went to Greece.

23 And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. 24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. 25 He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. 26 Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away

many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. 27 So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.”

28 Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” 29 So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions. 30 And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. 31 Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. 32 Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. 34 But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”

35 And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? 36 Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. 37 For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. 38 Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. 39 But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. 40 For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering." 41 And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

A commotion about "The Way."

Civil unrest from local trade guild regarding idols of Diana.

The Gospel has hit them in their wallets.

Religion and money.

A riot ensues, many don't know what they're even rioting about. Gentiles Paul wants to jump into the fray but is talked out of it by his entourage.

Alexander, a Jew is thrown into the mob by zealous Judaizers. His being a Jew didn't help matters any.

Eventually, the city clerk calms the crowd and reminds the people that there are courts for this sort of grievance. The crowd disperses.

1 After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia. 2 Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece 3 and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. 4 And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. 5 These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. 6 But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

This is mostly travelogue. Remember why the names of people and places are important in Acts. Paul is making way back east to get back to Jerusalem.

7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. 9 And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. 10 But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him." 11 Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. 12 And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

Relevance of the first day of the week.
Eutychus falls asleep and out of the window. It was hot!

13 Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot. 14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. 15 We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

More travelogue.

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to

Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

25 “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. 32 “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to

build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 35 I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, 38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

We now see Paul's mood change drastically. If we had been there, we could have felt the sadness of Paul as well as those who had come to see him. If we read carefully, we can pick up on this. We can hear that he is saying goodbye for the last time.

22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

For some time, as Paul has been traveling, it has been made known to him that trouble awaits him in Jerusalem. Whether God spoke this to him, or as we shall see, that others have prophesied these things to him, we can't say for sure. Most likely it is a combination of the two. At any rate, it is weighing heavily on his mind and he knows he won't see them again. At this point, there are two destinations he HAS to see; Jerusalem and Rome.

He states that he has held nothing back from them and that he has labored with his own hands so he can't be put into the same ilk with the itinerant religious teachers of the day.

He warns them about the false teachers to come – some even from within their circles.

He is resigned to his fate, though he doesn't know exactly what awaits him. Whatever happens, it is time for it to happen.

They part with a prayer.

1 Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos, the following day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. 3 When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria,

and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo. 4 And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. 5 When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed. 6 When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.

7 And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. 8 On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

More travelogue.

Another warning, while in Tyre: ***4 And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.***

Paul and his companions continue South along the coast.

Remember Phillip? He baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. That was 20 years prior. Phillip was

actually run out of Jerusalem due to Paul's campaign against the church in which Stephen was martyred. I'm sure they had some reminiscing to do.

Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. 10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' "

12 Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

Phillip's daughters prophesied. We aren't told that they specifically prophesied about what awaited Paul. They may have, may not have, but they did possess that gift.

Prophecy: not necessarily/ just foretelling the future. Can also be preaching.

Agabus – he had worked with Paul previously in famine relief. He comes and graphically prophesies. When the words aren't enough, a visual is given.

. 11 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' "

This is what will happen if/ when Paul gets to Jerusalem.

Paul's answer: ***13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."***

14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

Paul won't be dissuaded. The people put it all into the Lord's hands.

We have to look at the prophecies. **Are they warnings or prohibitions? Can Paul choose to not go to Jerusalem? How does this work for us?**

1 SAMUEL 23: 1 - 13

1 Then they told David, saying, “Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors.”

2 Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?”

And the Lord said to David, “Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah.”

3 But David's men said to him, “Look, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?” 4 Then David inquired of the Lord once again.

And the Lord answered him and said, “Arise, go down to Keilah. For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand.” 5 And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines, struck them with a mighty blow, and took away their livestock. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

6 Now it happened, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, that he went down with an ephod in his hand.

7 And Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah. So Saul said, “God has delivered him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars.” 8

Then Saul called all the people together for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.

9 When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod here.” 10 Then David said, “O Lord God of Israel, Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake. 11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O Lord God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant.”

And the Lord said, “He will come down.”

12 Then David said, “Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?”

And the Lord said, “They will deliver you.”

13 So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah and went wherever they could go. Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah; so he halted the expedition.

Free will and God’s sovereignty.

Paul had been told multiple times about what would happen in Jerusalem. This was building in

him. God was already speaking to him. Plus, people had prophesied. The question is what to do with the prophecies.

Paul has fled from mobs and death earlier in Acts.

God has steered Paul away from certain places and to other places earlier in Acts.

Could Paul have chosen not to go to Jerusalem? I believe so. And I don't believe God would have punished him for it. God would still have gotten Paul to Rome somehow.

The people around Paul, all who loved him, warned him not to go, because they wanted to save his life. They were concerned for him. They did this out of love. I'm sure Paul appreciated this.

But Paul was moved by a greater love – not for his own life, but for the love of the church. Remember, he had to deliver the love offering the church in Jerusalem, which was the “mother church” but was also most likely the poorest. Disunity in the church was a constant problem. We can see this in all of Paul's epistles.

What we do with God's plan for our lives is of utmost importance. We can be warned off, to go another way, or we can face the challenge, knowing there is a larger narrative in which we need to move.

Paul moved in faith, whichever way he went.

The way he decided what to do wasn't based on what was easiest for him, but what was better for the family of God. **The question we are to ask ourselves isn't whether or not we WANT to do something, but whether or not it is what God wants and does it benefit the family of God. This is the question we must ask ourselves when we come to a crossroads in ministry and/ or our lives.**

(Should I volunteer for children's ministry?)

Should I pursue this thing God has put in front of me? Will it take my time and energy? Yes, it will.

Paul was resigned to whatever God wanted, even to the point of imprisonment or death. That is where we need to be also. God bless.