

Chapter 21

Is your Christianity “Safe”?

- Good morning and welcome to Celebration Church.
 - i. My name is Michael Huskey for those who do not know me, and it is a privilege to bring the Word of God to you this morning.
- Here at Celebration, we have been working our way through the book of Acts, and I am going to pick up where we left off last week.
 - i. So please turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 21. We will be looking at verses 1–16.
- This is a very interesting section in the book of Acts. And really, there are many different directions that we could go this morning, because there are so many important things for us to understand here.
- The overall application that I want to draw out of this text this morning is the title of this message: Is your Christianity safe?
- That is not the question that I am asking.
- Is your Christianity just playing it safe . . . or is your Christianity dangerous?
- I can tell you church, that we are not called to a safe religion. We were never promised that.
- Christianity is not for the faint of heart. It is not for the cowardly as Revelation 21:8 reminds us of.
- Is your Christianity safe? Are you playing it safe? Maybe too safe!
- It may be safe, and that may be what God has in store for you, but the real question is this: are you willing to do the will of God . . . no matter what the cost?
- So we are dealing with sanctification this morning. I say that because I don’t want anyone to believe that I am talking about how to become a Christian.

1 When 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; 2 and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. 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. 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. 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. 6 Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again. 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. 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. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. 10 As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 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.' " 12 When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. 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." 14 And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!" 15 After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem. 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.

- Any good Christian sermon is going to include both the Law and the gospel.
- But first let us consider what Christ has done for us and how that we are never alone in obeying or following the things that we learn in Scripture.
- We never move on from the gospel, we never graduate.
- So, we are never alone, we have God indwelling us, who is propelling us to be more and more like Christ.
- He died so that we can be pleasing before God one day when we stand there before Him, to give an account of everything we have ever done in this life.
- But outside of Him, you will be accountable for every sin that you have ever committed, and God will carry out justice.
- Then He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, showing that what He accomplished on our behalf was indeed pleasing to the Father.

1 When 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;

2 *and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail.*

- Notice the word “we” in **verse 1**. Who was the writer of Acts? Luke.

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.*

- The church at Tyre was started because of the persecution of Steven.
- After he was murdered . . . the Christians had to scatter . . . to flee for their lives, because . . . their Christianity was not a safe religion.

Acts 11:19 *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.*

- It is interesting that this was indirectly started by Paul’s persecution before he met Christ on the road to Damascus.

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.*

- Now, this begs an important question: Was Paul disobedient to the Holy Spirit?
- When we see the words *Through the Spirit* in this verse, it means through the exercise of a spiritual gift.
- Could this be someone who was prophesying through the flesh or taking what the Holy Spirit said and adding to it?

1 Corinthians 14:29 *Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.*

- Paul told the church at Corinth that you need to judge, or test the things prophets say, to be sure that what they say is from God, or of the flesh.
- You see, Paul had already heard . . . from the Holy Spirit, so he didn’t even really need to use much discernment here.

Acts 20:22 *“And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,
23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.*

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.*

- Paul was not stopped by a false prophecy from disciples at Tyre.
- Something else we see Paul doing here . . . Is praying. He was praying because he understood that what he was about to do was going to be very difficult.

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

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.*

- Something we should see here is that Paul maximized his time. He never took vacation, he never relented. He pressed on with an unquenchable desire to serve the living God.

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.*

- Philip was one of the seven in Acts 6. This is the man that I was talking about earlier that had to flee . . . because of the persecution indirectly started by Paul.

We are first introduced to Philip in Acts 6 verse 4.

- He . . . and a select group of men were selected to serve the church, kind of like deacons. They saw to the widows and helped with the daily serving of food according to verse 1 of chapter 6.
- Acts 8:25–40 talks about Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch.
- Philip did not live a safe Christianity. He didn't as a deacon, and he didn't as an evangelist either. If you remember, he literally ran alongside the eunuch's chariot trying to evangelize him.

9 *Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.*

- There are two kinds of prophecy that we see in Scripture: that of revelation . . . and that of preaching or proclaiming the truth.
- It does not say that they were doing anything wrong. They had a godly father. We must assume that what they were doing was good and a true gift from God.

- What were they prophesying?
- There are some historians and scholars that believe that these four daughters of Philip gave Luke (who recorded the book of Luke and Acts) revelation from God as to some of the things that he recorded.
- How could that be if he wasn't always there?
- Papias, an early church father, wrote that Philip's daughters were commonly known as informants of the early history of the church.

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

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.' "

- Agabus was a true prophet of God and prophesied to Paul in a style that we are familiar with from the Old Testament.
- God's message was not to discourage Paul, but to show Paul and the witnesses, what was soon to take place.

12 When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem.

- Remember the word "we." This indicates that Luke was a part of this group of people who began to beg Paul not to go to Jerusalem.
- But . . . trying to talk someone out of doing the will of God . . . is never a good thing.

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."

- Here we can see that Paul was very sensitive to the church's crying and begging him not to go to Jerusalem.

- That reminds us of someone . . . doesn't it? Peter, who tried to talk Jesus out of going to the cross.
- This brings to mind a question that we should all ask: Have I ever discouraged someone from doing something that God has called them to do . . . because I believed that they would be unsuccessful or because I believed it would be dangerous?
- How many people have been discouraged, by well-meaning family members and friends, to not do what God has called them to do?
- We should be careful here . . . when someone is called to do something for God . . . we should not . . . discourage them. Satan does that for you.
- I am not saying to ignore wise council. We should all listen to the collective wisdom of our elders and leaders.

"I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

- This is courage lived out, not just spoken.
- The historical record indicates . . . that Paul was beheaded in Rome . . . for nothing more than loving Jesus Christ and loving the church.
- Is your Christianity playing it safe or is it dangerous?
- I am not talking about reckless. Christianity shouldn't be reckless, just longing to die the martyr's death. Just wanting to be persecuted.
- What does that look like?
- I am not talking about results. The results of your faithfulness are up to God.
- God told Isaiah that no one was going to listen to him in his ministry, and what did Isaiah say? Lord, I am ready . . . Here am I . . . send me!
- You see. . . being faithful looks like that . . . but it also looks like . . . being Faithful to witness in the marketplace. In the workplace, and anywhere someone will listen.
- Faithful to be disciplined and faithful to disciple.
- That is what it may look like to live a dangerous Christianity and not a safe one.
- You are called to be a light in this dark world, to strap on the yoke of Christ and to plow.

- Are you ready?

“The problem that people have with pain and suffering is not a problem of the suffering and it is not a problem with the pain; it is an inadequate doctrine of God. For if you have an adequate doctrine of God, then whatever happens is acceptable.”¹ John MacArthur

- I want you to think about that. Don’t let this just be words you hear this morning but let it grip your heart.
- Do you know God? I mean really know God!
- Do you understand His character and nature?
- Do you understand that God is good and sovereign and in control of all things.
- MacArthur is correct, if you have an adequate doctrine of God, then whatever happens in this world, in your life, no matter the outcome, and even if it seems like great loss to you . . . If you truly know God you understand that everything is going to be ok.

14 And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, “The will of the Lord be done!”

- Sometimes we do not understand the will of God, but these Christians did. This one verse could be another entire sermon.
- You will either go His direction . . . or you will try to swim against the current and find yourself in a place that is far worse off.
- Paul’s courage was contagious. Verse 15 says that they went with him, putting their own lives at risk.
- Our focus this morning has really been . . . the call to the Christian to have the courage needed to live a Christian life.

2 Corinthians 12:9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

- You see, we must understand that it is by God’s strength that we can do anything.

¹ MacArthur. Sermon called The Courage of Conviction, Part 3: Paying Any Price

- We are not strong on our own. And when we try to stand on our own two feet without leaning on God, we often fall and sometimes learn a hard lesson.
- So, putting those two things together:
- Be encouraged knowing that God has you. God will see you through. You are never alone, and that is the way God designed it.