

Stepping into the Unknown of the Known

Acts 21:1-36

Paul is headed to Jerusalem, but the gospel he is carrying is going to the ends of the earth.

vs. 4, Seven days in Tyre

Holy Spirit -> difficulties are ahead.

Families -> gather around Paul to pray and send him off.

vs. 8, Caesarea - home of Philip the evangelist (one of the seven).

vs. 9, Philip had four daughter - all prophesied

vs. 10, After several days, a prophet named Agabus

vs. 12, We (Luke included) pleaded with Paul not to go.

Our hearts are complex and filled with multiple layers of emotion, motive, and response.

- Riots in Antioch
- Stoning in Lystra
- Beatings in Philippi
- More riots in Thessalonica
- Run out of town in Beroea
- Court cases and anti-Jewish violence in Corinth
- 25,000 Ephesians chanting, "Great is Artemis."

Where do you think their hearts and minds were in regard to Paul's safety entering into Jerusalem?

vs. 13, I am ready! Even if death awaits! (What are you doing breaking my heart)?

vs. 14, The Lord's will be done.

Question: How do we get in the way of what God is doing in other people's lives? Are there ways to not be a hindrance to others specific to kingdom living? Are there ways to be sisters and brothers of encouragement? Is there any smooth way out of the complication of life and the discernment of decision making?

vs. 15-16, Arrived in Jerusalem and stayed with Mnason of Cyprus (an early disciple).

vs. 17-19, Paul is welcomed and shares all that God has been doing.

James -> brother of Jesus and leader of church in Jerusalem.

vs. 20, This is what is taking place in Jerusalem.

- Thousands of Jews have believed.
- They are all zealous for the law.

vs. 21, There are others who are trying to distort the facts.

- You are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses.
- You are telling them to not circumcise their children (Paul had Timothy circumcised).
- Don't live according to your customs.

Truth: Paul had instructed Gentiles that they need not be circumcised, because they need not become Jews in order to be full members of God's people.

Question: Are you quick to get lured into false information? How do you separate truth from lies?

vs. 23-24, You need to show them you have not abandoned your Jewishness and the traditions of your ancestors.

- Go to the Temple.
- Purify yourself along with 4 other men who have taken a nazirite vow.
- Pay for them to complete their vow (shave their heads).
- Then everyone will know you are also careful about observing the law.

vs. 25, A letter has been written which repeats the decision that had been made at the Jerusalem Counsel (Acts 15).

Notice: Paul again is willing to listen. He demonstrates his care for all people. He is willing to adjust.

Question: Are you willing to listen and adjust? How do you demonstrate care for others even if it isn't what you prefer? With what regularity do you let go of your preferences to serve others? BTW this is at the heart of Jesus centered living (sermon on the mount).

vs. 27, Some Jews (Jewish Nationalism)

Fellow Israelites

Our people

Our law

This place (our Temple)

Only listening to and believing what is convenient for one to listen to and believe.

- The law of Moses is eternal and unbreakable.
- The Temple is the center of everything.
- The national dream is liberation from Rome.
- This is how the "kingdom of Israel" will be restored.

Aren't these the same things Jesus talked about?

At the end of the day, all of this is just made up non-sense!

Remember: Humans are humans -> Worldwide there is an ever increasing rise of nationalism. The false claims haven't changed in 2000 years.

vs. 28, He has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place.

vs. 30-36, The crowd is stirred up and seize Paul.

vs. 33, The commander took Paul into custody (saved Paul's life)

- Notice: Agabus' prophesy was generally correct.

Compare and Contrast the prophets of the OT and those in the NT.

- Both could be conditional in nature (if one did x... then y would happen).
- Unlike OT prophets NT prophecy would seem to have authority of general content, but not to be taken as a literal transcript of God's words. It was understood to be weighed and discerned.
- The OT had a much more, "This is what the Lord says" quality, God speaking directly through the prophet.

Mob mentality -> Get rid of Him! (Kill him)!

Question: Are you willing to walk the narrow path of kingdom living into the unknown with what is known? What will this require of you?