

## Acts 21:1-14 “The Power of the Spirit to Stand for Christ” 1.18.15

**Intro.** Although most Christians in this country are not threatened with martyrdom it is nevertheless difficult to stand for Christ. I stopped counting all the times I’ve felt overwhelmed in ministry and wanted to give up. It’s hard to stand for Christ at work, school, a difficult marriage, sexual purity, ministry, sharing faith, tithing, temptation.

**Subject: Paul stands for Christ despite hardship**

**Object: Be Ready to Stand for Christ**

**Context:** Paul met with elders from Ephesus to encourage them to lead the church, and is now headed to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, provide financial relief from the Gentile churches, & to see Jews saved [Ac.20].

**1. Know God’s will [Ac. 20:22-24]** Paul was warned and expected to suffer at Jerusalem – yet ready to stand [20:24]. Paul knew that it was God’s will for him to go. Despite receiving prophetic warnings that he would suffer hardship Paul continues to go to Jerusalem. **The will of the Lord be done [14]**

**a. What has God said about the issue? What is His will? Cf. your happiness**

? What are some of the issues in the Bible where people will be challenged to stand?

\* Standing for Christ at work, school, a difficult marriage, sexual purity, ministry, sharing faith, tithing, life dominating sin

\* Sanctity of Life Sunday (today) unplanned, unwanted pregnancy & God’s will re life [3,000+ abortions a day in the U.S. (cf. VCPC)]

**2. Don’t stand alone [1-4]** 1Now 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.2And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. 3When 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: Paul sails across the Mediterranean to get to Jerusalem.

The ship landed at Tyre (Lebanon – near Israel) to unload cargo [3].

**a. Paul actively sought other Christians [4] And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days:** Greek re finding disciples speaks of actively seeking.

**Eccl.4:9-10 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor.10For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him *who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.***

i. **seven days:** spent meaningful time together to strengthen & be encouraged

\*

**3. Be prepared to suffer [4-6]** They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. 5When 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. 6When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, & they returned home.

**a. Expect challenges: Warned that he would suffer in Jerusalem [4] [20:22-24]**

**i. Through the Spirit [4]:** presume prophecies warning of hardship

ii. Warning was to prepare Paul not prevent him from going

**b. pray [5]** praying for God's power to stand as well as to be spared suffering

iii. the church (men, women and kids) came to bid farewell & prayed [5-6]

\* Marriage: naïve to think there won't be hardship (for better or worse ...)

#### **4. Be strengthened by the Word of God [7-11]**

**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. **9**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: **v.8** Caesarea is seaport approaching Jerusalem. **Phillip** was one of the 7 deacons who oversaw the benevolence program in Jerusalem – described as having a good reputation, full of wisdom, and full of the Holy Spirit [**Ac.6:3**]. He is the only one in NT called an evangelist. Led a great revival in Samaria then called by God to reach one man an Ethiopian treasurer in Gaza. Ironically, 20 years before Phillip was driven from Jerusalem re persecution led by Paul. **v.9 Four virgin daughters who prophesied:** forthtell vs. foretell the future, strong Christian family.

**a. the purpose of the (prophetic) word is to strengthen and give hope**

**v.10-11 Agabus the prophet:** correctly predicted the famine at Jerusalem [Ac.11:28] (credible), dramatic picture with Paul's belt to show Paul bound by the Jewish leaders and delivered to Gentile leaders. **through the Spirit [4,11]**

**1Cor.14:3 But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.**

**Rom.15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.**

**? How has the word strengthened you to stand for Christ? [\*bz and this passage**

#### **5. Trust God [12-14]** Theme: commit to God's will

**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."

**v.12** Luke & Paul's friends plead with him not to go. Paul feels their pain and fear and it breaks his heart [13]. Paul was sad that they are trying to persuade him not to submit to God's will because of hardship.

## **a. Know God's will is best for you despite the struggles**

**I am ready [13]:** prepared to stand for Christ despite hardship.

- i. Know God is good because He gave us Jesus & He has gone to the cross for you
- ii. are you ready?

**b.** Most of us will not be called to literally die for our faith, but we must die to our will for God's will to be done.

**The will of the Lord be done [14]:**

**Matt. 26:39**

## **Discussion Qs**

- 1. What are some of the issues in the Bible where people will be challenged to stand?**
- 2. Why is it easier to stand with others rather than alone? Share an example from your life.**
- 3. How has the word strengthened you to stand for Christ?**
- 4. Reflection: consider an area in *your life* where you are challenged to stand for Christ. What has God said about the issue? Are you trying to stand alone? Are you prepared to suffer? How has the word strengthened you to stand for Christ? Will you trust God?**