

December 10

Acts 20 and 21

Hello everybody and welcome back to your December 10 installment of the Project 4:4 Daily Accelerators. My name is Lisa Ashton and today we are going on a road trip...in my handy dandy motorized chair. Where we headed? San Antonio, Texas! Glad to have you along, maybe I will attach a wagon in the back to have your ride. To let you in on a little bit about the trip. We will be stopping in 11 cities on the way there. Some we will stay for a day others for even a week! I anticipate that this will be an emotionally draining trip. You are going to see me cry a whole lot. For most of the people we see I will never see again. Oh, and I am pretty sure that when we get to San Antonio there are going to be people there who want to kill me. I'll have you know that no matter how many leaders we meet along our journey in the next 50 days who warn me and plead with me that I shouldn't go, I am going to go anyway...for I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Ok, so maybe you caught on to what I was doing here. From our reading today we learned more about Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey. And the distance from where Philippi to Jerusalem is about 900 miles – close to the distance from Omaha, NE to San Antonio, TX. And with Paul being on foot or by boat, I feel it would be like riding one of these for the journey of the trip...however, at the rate this chair is going Paul could probably walk faster than this.

Paul is on a quest to get to Jerusalem. His main drive to get to Jerusalem is to deliver a relief fund he has been collecting. We have learned this not from our Acts reading but from the I Corinthians 16:1 and II Corinthians 8 & 9 passages. Paul was collecting a relief fund for a famine that was going on Jerusalem and he was compelled to get the money there no matter what. We also know that his calling by God at the beginning of his conversion would be to suffer for his name and to be before kings and people of power. Paul is convinced of his mission and sets out with his team of men. Travelling with Luke, he leaves Philippi and meets up with his team of 7 other men in Troas (shows map, map is page three of this document)

In Troas we hear of his lengthy sermon that lasted until the wee hours of the night and poor young Eutychus who fell asleep, fell out of a window, died and raised to life. What I think is funny, is Paul went right back upstairs to eat and then talk some more until daylight...like raising a dead boy to life was no big thing. Paul did not mess around.

More stops along the way and did you see he avoided time in Ephesus? Perhaps he knew that since he had spent 3 years there it would be too difficult to do a quick drop in visit. We learn Paul wanted to make it to Jerusalem by Pentecost, that's 50 days from the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened bread, when they left Philippi. Now Paul doesn't ignore his Ephesus leaders, no, instead he sends of them when he gets to Miletus. I find this very strategic. He wanted to make his time

count, so he didn't waste his time in Ephesus with everyone. Instead he went on Miletus and had them come to him...looks like it was about 30 miles.

We are not going to dive into the message he gave the elders in Miletus but please take some time if you haven't and study the main points. After his parting words they wept, kissed, embraced and said their goodbyes.

Have you experienced this type of goodbye before? Now with technology these days our goodbyes may not seem as final as Paul's was. How different his goodbye may have been if he said, "Won't see ya for awhile but hey can you skype?" Regardless we see that Paul had made meaningful and deep friendships. He was pretty polarizing of a dude and I bet people either loved him or hated him.

On we go with Paul to a few more cities. Two things I wanted to mention before I go today: One, did you notice the verse that talked about Philip, from Caesarea, the evangelist having 4 unmarried daughters who prophesied? Can you imagine that household? Whew, it must have been poppin for Jesus...not lacking in hearing a word from the Lord, that's for sure. I am encouraged to see that Luke, the writer would include this to show us the important spiritual gifts given to these women. Way to go single ladies! Paul no doubt recognized them and valued this family enough to stay with them.

Another thing I noticed is the verse that said, "Through the Spirit they (disciples) urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem"? Now if Paul feels led by the spirit to go to Jerusalem and his disciples are "through the spirit" telling him not to go, how do we reconcile this? Is the Spirit contradicting himself? I think in this case it is important to recognize the difference between a warning and prohibition. When Agabus put on Paul's belt and prophesied Paul's impending doom it was a warning, not a command for Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Paul heard the warnings, the warnings were true, and he knew despite them he was called to Jerusalem. "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready to not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And his disciples give up trying and say, "The Lord's will be done."

Paul was very aware of his calling by God to go to Jerusalem and he wasn't going to let the danger of suffering or even death get in the way of being obedient. Something else to think about regarding these apparent contradictory leadings of the spirit is were they tested? In other words, were these prophecies spiritually discerned as true or false? In I Thessalonians 5:20-21 Paul writes, "Do not despise prophecies but test everything". I wonder if this command flowed out of his experience of having prophecies spoken to him that weren't tested. Something to think about.

That about covers it for today. Tomorrow we pick up right where we left off as Paul and crew arrives in Jerusalem! Stay tuned...arrest, trial and conspiracies right around the corner!

Isn't the Bible exciting! This is Lisa Ashton and I will see you tomorrow!

