



## THE STORY CONTINUES

### THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM | ACTS 21:1-16

When I was younger, I chose restaurants purely on the basis of price and quantity. I was looking for as much food as possible for as little money as possible. Over time I became a bit more sophisticated, so the goal was to get as much good food as possible at a reasonable price. Now, I am completely out of control. I am looking for really great food in a really fun atmosphere. I will go way out of my way and spend more money than I should to enjoy a fine dining experience with friends and family.

We all love our comfort. We spend a lot of time and money making our homes as comfortable as possible. We spend as much money on our cars as our parents spent on their first home, because we want our cars to be as comfortable as possible—we are looking for added features like individual climate control, heated and cooled seats and individual gaming consoles for the kids. Often the deciding factors in choosing a job are the added amenities. It is not enough that they make a generous contribution to our 401K, God forbid they don't have an espresso machine and a healthy variety of fair trade coffees.

So we wake up in the morning, slip out of our sleep number beds, grab a cup of coffee, walk out the front door to slide into our comfortable cars and drive to a really comfortable work place. All the while living for the weekend so we can hang out with our really cool friends in really trendy restaurant.

It is no wonder we resent it when someone asks us to do anything that is the least bit uncomfortable—even if that someone is our Lord.

There is no place our lives are more out of sync with the gospel than our desire to be comfortable and keep ourselves entertained. We want to be comfortable. God wants us to be holy. The two are diametrically opposed. The gospel always calls us to go places we would not normally go, to do things we would not normally do, and to be people we would not normally be. In short, the first step in following Christ is always a step out of our comfort zone.

Acts 20 and 21 record Paul's final trip to Jerusalem. There are three big things happening in the text. The Holy Spirit warns Paul that hardship and imprisonment await him. The church pleads with him to avoid hardship and imprisonment at all cost. Paul is more determined than ever to make the trip to Jerusalem because he knows that is exactly where God is leading him.

### THE STOPOVER IN MILETUS (20:22-24)

<sup>22</sup> "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. <sup>23</sup> I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. <sup>24</sup> However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

1. What do you think Paul means when he tells us he is compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem?
2. What does the Holy Spirit tell Paul awaits him in Jerusalem?
3. What do you think the Spirit warns Paul of the trouble he will experience in Jerusalem?
4. What is it that enables Paul to endure hardship and imprisonment for the sake of Christ?
5. What are some of the hardships we will be called to endure for the sake of Christ?
6. What are some rich biblical truths that enable us to endure hardship and suffering for the sake of Christ?

### THE STOPOVER IN TYRE (21:2-6)

<sup>2</sup> We found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, went on board and set sail. <sup>3</sup> After sighting Cyprus and passing to the south of it, we sailed on to Syria. We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo.

<sup>4</sup> We sought out the disciples there and stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup> When it was time to leave, we left and continued on our way. All of them, including wives and children, accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray. <sup>6</sup> After saying goodbye to each other, we went aboard the ship, and they returned home.

1. While Paul and the church are hearing the same message from the Spirit, they respond to the message in completely different ways. How do the disciples at Tyre respond to the Spirit's warning that Paul will face hardship and imprisonment in Jerusalem?

2. What do you think motivated them to respond the way they did?
3. What are some things they may have overlooked when offering guidance to Paul?
4. How should this passage inform the way we respond to those around us who are experiencing suffering and hardship?
5. How does this passage inform the way we should respond when we are experiencing suffering and hardship?

### THE STOPOVER IN CAESAREA (21:7-12)

<sup>7</sup> We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and sisters and stayed with them for a day. <sup>8</sup> Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. <sup>9</sup> He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

<sup>10</sup> After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. <sup>11</sup> Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.' "

<sup>12</sup> When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." <sup>14</sup> When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

1. What is striking about Agabus's prophecy?
2. How do the disciples in Caesarea respond to Agabus's prophecy?
3. How does Paul respond to Agabus's prophecy?
4. How does Paul's response inform the way we would respond to the difficulty in our life?
5. How do Paul's companions ultimately resolve the conflict?
6. When is it most difficult for us to surrender to God's will?
7. What happens when we do not surrender to God's will?
8. What happens when we do surrender to God's will?
9. How can God use hardship and suffering for his glory and our joy?
10. How can we experience God's joy in the midst of hardship and suffering?