

“Courage and Determination”  
Acts 21:1-14  
(Preached at Trinity, January 9, 2007)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In this section of the Book of Acts Luke has determined to give us a historical account of Paul's journey from Miletus to Jerusalem. As we saw in **Chapter 20** Paul left Miletus and went to Ephesus where he addressed the elders. After teaching and encouraging he left them with much sorrow.  
**Acts 20:36-37** – “And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,”
2. Leaving Ephesus Paul set his sights once again upon Jerusalem.
3. Paul felt a driving compulsion to go to Jerusalem. He felt he was under a Divine mandate.  
**Acts 20:22** – “And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there.”
4. He also had a passion for his kinsmen the Jews.
  - A. He had a passion for the unbelieving Jews  
**Romans 9:1-3** – “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, <sup>2</sup> That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:”
  - B. Paul also had a compassion for the believing Jews who were in poverty. Paul had collected an offering for the poor Jewish. We see this through several of his epistles.
    1. All of 2 Cor. 9 deals with this collection.
    2. Paul mentions it in Galatians 2
    3. Again, he mentions it in Romans 15
    4. With this trip to Jerusalem he is bringing the offering.  
**Acts 24:17** – “Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.”
5. As Paul travels from city to city on his way to Jerusalem I want to direct your attention to the central theme. We find Paul's unwavering commitment to go to Jerusalem. As we go through this passage I want you to look at Paul's courage and determination.
  - I. Paul's courage and determination was focused
    - A. As we read through this passage we find Paul with a single mind – a clear purpose - to go to Jerusalem
      1. Paul is very busy – his travels are taking him through many cities, yet his focus remains the same. He is determined to go to Jerusalem.
      2. You'll notice that most of his visits are very brief
        - a. In **Verse 1** we find they “came with a straight course unto Coos.” They stay for one night and then immediately leave.

- b. They briefly journey to Rhodes and then on to Patara
  - c. Paul is on a mission. He is focused, determined – he has his sights on Jerusalem.
  - d. In **Verse 3** we find they continue their journey to Tyre, but this is not their destination – they remained for only seven days.
  - e. In **Verse 7** they landed at Ptolemais but only remained a single day.
  - f. They remained a longer period with Philip in Caesarea but still Paul’s focus had not changed.
- B. This must be our life – we must have a focus. What is it?
- 1. Our focus is upon Christ and His Kingdom  
**Matthew 6:33** – “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
  - 2. Paul says our focus must be to press toward the mark of our high calling. In other words we press towards Christ and eternity.  
**Philippians 3:13-14** – “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, <sup>14</sup> I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”
  - 3. There is no end to the things that can distract – we must remain focused  
**Hebrews 12:1-3** – “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”
- II. Paul’s courage and determination was fixed – **Verse 4**
- A. There is an interesting point to ponder as we find Paul landing for a brief period in Tyre.
- 1. In **Verse 4** we read that Paul landed in Tyre where he remained for seven days with some disciples. This was not one of the churches founded by Paul but by the Christians who fled from Jerusalem during the persecution after the martyrdom of Stephen.
    - a. These brothers and sisters admonished Paul not to go to Jerusalem. The text says they were moved by the Spirit.  
**Acts 21:4** – “And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.”
    - b. We’ve already seen that Paul’s mission was a direct call by the Holy Spirit. Paul was “bound” to go.  
**Acts 20:22** – “And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:”
  - 2. Has the Holy Spirit now changed His command to Paul?
    - a. Obviously one would have to be very careful with such a situation.

- b. It would be easy to conclude that Paul is now acting in disobedience. This is the position of James Montgomery Boice.
    3. I don't believe this is the proper conclusion. I agree with most of the other commentators including John Dick, Matthew Henry, John MacArthur, and F.F. Bruce that this was not an act of disobedience at all but a demonstration that Paul would not be deterred from His appointed task. Paul was fixed in his courage and determination.
      - a. The problem is the ambiguity of the passage.
      - b. **Acts 20:22** could simply be Paul feeling a strong desire in his own spirit or it could be referring to the Holy Spirit.
      - c. We can see the ambiguity in the translations  
<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 20:22** – “And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there,”  
<sup>KJV</sup> **Acts 20:22** – “And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there.”  
**Acts 20:22** - "And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,”
    4. We have seen in previous chapters Paul's obedience to the Holy Spirit  
**Acts 16:6** – “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,”
    5. The best way to understand **Verse 4** is that the Holy Spirit had revealed unto some in Tyre that Paul would suffer if he went to Jerusalem and they tried to persuade him not to go.  
 The same thing happened in **Verses 11-12** with Agabus.
    6. In neither of these passages do we find a direct command by the Holy Spirit for Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Rather, we find Paul fixed in his determination based upon his earlier charge by the Holy Spirit. He would not be derailed from his duty – he was fixed in his mind.  
 Neither the pleadings of the brethren nor the threat of persecution kept Paul from his appointed task.
  - B. This must be the heart of our life
    1. There are many forces to derail us from our duty. It is easy to be distracted by things otherwise good – occupation, family – none of these things must be all consuming.  
 We can also be distracted by covetousness, love for pleasure.
    2. We must be fixed in our courage and determination to serve Christ no matter what we may face.
- III. Paul's courage and determination had the right foundation – **Verse 5**
- A. When we talk about Paul's courage and determination we are not simply talking about his human strength
    1. Paul demonstrated throughout his ministry great courage yet as a man he felt great fear.  
**1 Corinthians 2:3** – “And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.”

2. Notice the behavior in **Verse 5**  
“we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.”
  3. These believers continued on their knees seeking God
- B. We must be strong and courageous – but our courage is not our own
1. Our source of courage must be Christ! He will keep us pressing on with determination. Listen to where Paul told the Corinthians his strength lay.  
**2 Corinthians 4:8-11** – “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup> Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. <sup>11</sup> For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.”
  2. We must keep our eyes upon Christ. We must be ever prayerful.
  3. In Ephesians 6 Paul spoke of the spiritual warfare that every believer faces. It is a terrible fight, an intense struggle that could rob us of our courage.
    - a. What does Paul say to us.  
**Ephesians 6:10** – “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”
    - b. What are the most important three things Paul tells us to avail ourselves of?  
One – **Verse 16** - Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.  
Two – **Verse 17** - the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:  
Three – **Verse 18** - Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit
  4. We must be continually on our knees seeking God.
- IV. Paul’s courage and determination made him willing to forfeit everything – **Verse 13**
- A. Paul remained single minded and was willing to make whatever sacrifice necessary to accomplish his work
1. After arriving in Caesarea Paul stayed with Philip described as one of the seven. God had also advanced him to the office of evangelist and he had preached the Gospel in Samaria.
  2. While there a certain prophet by the name of Agabus prophesied of Paul’s suffering if he continued to Jerusalem.
  3. This caused great concern for the disciples and they began to try to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem begging him not to go because of the great danger it posed.  
**Acts 21:12** – “they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.”
  4. Paul rebuked them with tears stating he was willing to forfeit everything, even his own life.  
**Acts 21:13** – “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

5. Paul had already demonstrated in his ministry that Christ was worth any degree of suffering. And Paul did suffer greatly but did it gladly.  
**Romans 8:18** – “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”
  6. Paul was willing to give up every earthly treasure because he had met Christ who had filled him with riches untold.
  7. What a testimony this must have been to the brethren  
**Acts 21:14** – “And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.”
- B. What would you give up for the cause of Christ?
1. Are you prepared to forfeit all
  2. Many have suffered greatly as martyrs because they would not turn from Christ. Would you?
  3. Do you give of your life now? Are you pressing on with courage and determination.

#### Conclusion:

1. If you are pressing on in the service of Christ you will find great courage and determination in the power of the Master.
  - a. David knew that he stood representing the living God as he boldly stood before Goliath.  
**1 Samuel 17:26** – “who *is* this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”  
**1 Samuel 17:45-46** – “Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. <sup>46</sup> This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.”
  - b. If you are certain of God's call upon your life you can live boldly and confidently. Not all are called as preachers. Not all are called as deacons. Not all are called to teach. But all are called to serve the Master.
2. Are you pressing on with courage and determination? Nothing will turn you. Nothing will dissuade you from your duty. Such a life is a powerful testimony both to believers and unbelievers.