**Paul Sets Sail For Jerusalem**

(Acts 21:1-17)

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

 A cruise ship was sailing past an island one day, when suddenly some of the passengers noticed that a bearded man had come running up to the shore of the island *screaming,* and waving his arms wildly. One of the passengers asked the captain, “Who is that man?” The captain said, “I don’t know, but he goes *nuts* every year when we pass him!”

 By the way, do you why the portholes on cruise ships are round? It’s so that, when they break, the water doesn’t hit you square in the face.

 Well, speaking of ships and sailing, here in our text in Acts 21, the Apostle Paul has just finished saying a very touching goodbye to the elders of the Ephesian church at the end of the previous chapter, and now he’s ready to set sail once again for Jerusalem. The story begins in Acts 21:1, where we read,

 **“And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara.”**

After Paul was finally able to get away from those Ephesian elders who were clinging to him with hugs and tears, he and his company “launched” the ship we read about in the last verse of Acts 20, and sailed to the Greek island of Coos, and from there to the Greek island of Rhodes. And Rhodes was famous for something called “The Colossus of Rhodes,” a huge brass idol of the Greek God Helius. It was 108’ tall, making it as tall as an 11 story building. That made it one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

 But by the time Paul got there, it had fallen down during an earthquake. And as Paul saw the mighty god of those people just lying there on the ground, you have to wonder if he thought of the false god Dagon that we read about in I Samuel 5:1-5. After the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant, they placed it in their temple with Dagon, but it kept falling down before the ark, and they kept propping it back up.

 But the Colossus just lay there on the ground *for centuries,* which makes me think of that old television commercial where the elderly lady calls out, “I’ve fallen, and I can’t get up!” It’s sad when the elderly find themselves in a predicament like that while living alone, but it’s even sadder if *your god* falls and can’t get up, as was the case with the Colossus. But if *your* god is anything but the God of the Bible, I can guarantee that someday he’s going to fall in your eyes, and let *you* down in the process. And there won’t be anything funny about that, so please consider learning all you can learn about the only God that will never let you down, the God of the Holy Scriptures.

 But verse 1 says that after they left Rhodes, they sailed to the island of Patara, and then,

 **“And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.**

 **“Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden” (Acts 21:2,3).**

Now Cyprus was where Paul’s old friend Barnabas lived (Acts 4:36), but Paul couldn’t stop and see him. You see, he wasn’t on a cruise ship that makes a lot of stops in a lot of different ports. When verse 3 says that the ship had to unlade her “burden” in Tyre, it’s talking about her *cargo.* Paul was sailing on what we’d call a *freighter.* If you had to travel by ship in those days, that is how you traveled. You want down to the local seaport, found a cargo ship that was going your way, and paid the captain to take you along. So when you read about all the sailing Paul does in Acts, don’t picture him dining in the 1st class dining hall like Jack and Rose on the Titanic, or sitting at Captain Stubing’s table on the Love Boat, if you’re old enough to remember that old TV show. For Pauol, it was more like hitching a ride on a freight train than vacationing on a Carnival Cruise.

 Now next, verse 4 says,

 **“And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.”**

Now when it says that these disciples told Paul not to go to Jerusalem “through the Spirit,” that means these disciples were *prophets,* for only prophets spoke by God’s Spirit. And this wasn’t the first time the Holy Spirit had warned Paul about going to Jerusalem. Back in Acts 20:22,23, Paul said,

 **Acts 20:22,23: “I go bound in the spirit *unto Jerusalem,* not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, *saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.”***

In every city Paul stopped at on this trip, the Spirit warned him what would *happen* if he went to Jerusalem, and it wasn’t going to be good. So here we have to ask why Paul was going to Jerusalem if the Spirit was telling him not to. I mean, he not only seemed *determined* to disobey God, we know he’s in a big hurry to do it, because just one chapter ago, we read:

 **“...*he hasted,* if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem *the day of Pentecost”* (Acts 20:16).**

So now we have to ask why Paul seemed to be in such an all-fired *panic* to go somewhere that God was telling him not to go. And the answer to that question is found at the *end* of our text, so I’ll have to ask you to just sit tight until we get there.

 Especially because there’s still *another* question that Acts 21:4 raises. If Pau is in such a big hurry to get to Jerusalem, why does verse 4 say he decided to tarry, or hang out, in Tyre *for seven days?* And the answer to that is, back then it often took *several* days to unload a ship’s cargo, as we saw them doing at the end of verse 3. Even today it can take two or three days, and that’s sing forklifts and cranes that weren’t available in Paul’s day.

 So Paul had to just cool his heels and wait for the ship to unload before continuing his journey—and he probably also had to wait for the ship to *reload,* for even today, cargo ships don’t travel empty. They wait until they are filled with freight again before they leave port.

 But we know that Paul must have spent that week teaching those saints, and enjoying their fellowship, because the next two verses of our text say,

 **“And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.**

 **“And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again” (Acts 21:5,6).**

Now doesn’t that touching scene sound a lot like what happened when Paul went to leave the Ephesian elders at the end of chapter 20? Look up at verse 36, where we read,

 **“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,**

 **“Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship” (Acts 20:36-38).**

Paul had spent *three years* in Ephesus, and had endeared himself to those elders so deeply that they just couldn’t bear to see him leave.

 But this was Paul’s *first* trip to Tyre, and he only stayed there a week. So how come they were fussing over him as if they’d known him three years? You can probably guess the answer to that question. It doesn’t take long for grace beli3evers to work our way into one another’s hearts. At the end of every service at my church, we sing that old hymn, “Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love,” and it truly is a blessed tie that binds our hearts together in Christ. And the newest among us feel that bind as strongly as the rest of us.

 Well, after Paul and his company managed to get away from that *new* group of believers, we learn what happens next in the next two verses:

 **“And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.**

 **“And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him” (Acts 21:7,8).**

Now in case you forgot who Philip was, we need to review his story, for he’s a great example of the big things that God can do through you if you’re willing to let Him do *little* things through you first. Back in Acts 6:1-5, we read,

 **“...there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, *because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.* Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, *and serve tables...*look ye out among you seven men...full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, *whom we may appoint over this business.* But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, *and to the ministry of the word.* And...they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, *and Philip...”***

 So Philip was one of the seven men wo weren’t too proud to serve food to widows at tables so the 12 apostles could give themselves to the prayerful study of the Scriptures.

 Now as you can see, those men were spiritually *overqualified* to be waiting tables. I mean, they were filled with the Holy Spirit of God in that miraculous way that gifted men with spiritual gifts in those days, and they were said to be filled with the very wisdom of God as well. With that in mind, they could have easily decided that they were *above* serving tables—*but they didn’t.*

 And God takes note of that. We know that because the very next time we see Philip, God has made him the evangelist that we find here in our text.

**“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, *and preached Christ unto them”* (Acts 8:5).**

And if you know the story, you know that from there God sent Philip to preach Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch as an evangelist as well.

 Now all of this should remind you of something the Lord said in Matthew 25:21:

 ***“*Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over *a few things,* I will make thee ruler *over many things...”***

As you can see from the principle the Lord expresses there, God waits to see if you are faithful in the little things of His work before He lets you take on larger responsibilities.

 But here I hasten to add that there is nothing *little* about making sure that widows have enough to eat. When some ladies in my church lost their husbands not long ago, I checked on them a few times to make sure they were doing okay financially, and I know some of the other members of my congregation did as well. That’s an *important* part of serving the Lord. It’s only little in comparison with the care of men’s *souls* that men like apostles and evangelists and pastors are involved in.

 But if you don’t honor people who are serving *any* kind of tables in God’s work, Paul has some advice for you. He told the Corinthians,

 **“...those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, *upon these we bestow more abundant honour”* (I Corinthians 12:23).**

 At the church I pastor, we have plenty of people doing all the unglamorous things that have to be done in any church ministry. They do them to serve the Lord, and to make it so that I don’t have to quit my own personal prayerful study of the Scriptures to do them. They might see me doing a painting project on our church workday, but that’s only because as a former painting contractor, painting is one of the few things I’m any good at in life, and I’m happy to be able to contribute something on work day that doesn’t raise dust and aggravate my asthma. But literally everything else in our church gets down by someone else, someone who deserves our honor and esteem as their fellow believers.

I know this. *God* esteems *all* members of the Body of Christ equally, and He rewards faithfulness. A man in my congregation spent years doing little things to help out at the annual *Berean Bible Fellowship* Bible conference, and when the BBF board noticed that, it was one of the reasons they asked him to be a board member.

 In addition, back when I was a teenager, I was at a Bible conference at our grace church in Madison, Wisconsin, and Pastor C. R. Stam, one of the founders of the modern grace movement, asked me to get something for him from his car. When I did, I’m sure he noticed that this long-haired teenager wasn’t too proud to be his gopher. It might be why he decided to hire me a few years later—well, that and maybe he heard that at that same conference, me and a couple of other young men went door to door in the neighborhood inviting people to the Bible conference.

 All I know for sure is—do you know that big guy you see teaching the Word on *Berean Bible Society’s* television broadcast? Pastor Kevin is now the president of BBS, but he started out as the typesetter for the *Berean Searchlight,* and on the weekends he was the janitor who cleaned our bathrooms. So if you want to follow a godly man’s good example, don’t ever be too proud to serve the Lord humbly whenever you get the chance.

 But when verse 8 ends by saying that Paul decided to “abide” with Philip, you have to wonder if he chose to stay with an *evangelist* instead of a *prophet* because he was sick and tired of hearing the prophets tell him he had no business going to Jerusalem. But if that’s why he decided to stay with Philip, he was out of luck, for we read in verse 9,

 **“And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy” (Acts 21:9).**

Poor Paul just couldn’t get away from God’s prophets, no matter where he stayed!

 Of course, it doesn’t say that those prophetesses joined the chorus of prophets telling him not to go to Jerusalem, but we have to assume they did. Why else would Luke bother to tell us about prophets here unless they were doing some actual prophesying.

 But Paul must have put those Spirit-filled ladies on the pay-no-mind list, for God sent Paul *another* prophet in verse 10 of our text, where Luke tells us,

 **“And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus” (Acts 21:10).**

Now when I was restudying this passage, I had to pause and ask myself why Paul spent “many days” there if he was *hasting* to get to Jerusalem before Pentecost. At first I thought that maybe he was making good time, so he decided to slow down a little. But when you’re in a hurry and you get ahead, you don’t slow down. You keep hurrying, arrive at your destination early, and *then* kill time, you don’t dawdle on the way. Then I thought that maybe he was just waiting for another ship, and it actually could be as simple as that.

 Of course, you may be thinking, “How thick-headed can you be? Paul was staying with a man who had *four single daughters,* and Paul himself was single.” But later when we talk about *why* Paul was in such a hurry, I think you’ll agree that the apostle would never let his own personal interests, as good-intentioned as they might be, keep him from hastening to Jerusalem.

 No, I think what’s happening here is that God was *using* those young ladies to get to Paul in ways that perhaps male prophets could not, and get him to think through what he was doing. You know, you ladies have more influence on us men than you know.

 When I was a boy, I read a book based on the Star Trek television show, and in this book Captain Kirk and Spock were marooned on a planet. While there, they heard a local computer talking in a man’s voice, and one of them said, “Evidently the people here haven’t yet learned that men pay more attention to a woman’s voice than a man’s voice.” Trekkies know that the voice of the computer on the Enterprise was that of a woman.

 I don’t know if it’s true that men pay more attention to a woman’s voice or not, of course. Maybe the reason God has female prophets as well as male prophets is that He knows *some* men pay more attention to a woman’s voice than a man’s voice. All I know for sure is that you ladies shouldn’t let being a woman make you think that God can use you to have an influence on other members of the Body of Christ, even on great men of God like Paul.

 But when these four girls couldn’t talk Paul out of going to Jerusalem, God sent this Agabus guy to warn Paul *some more,* as we see in Acts 21:11:

 **“And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”**

 Now a girdle in Bible days was a belt, as we see when we read of Elijah the prophet,

 **“He was...*girt* with a *girdle* of *leather* about his loins...” (II Kings 1:8).**

The word “girt” is the verb form of the word “girdle.” Those long, flowing robes that men wore in those days had to be cinched up with *something,* and that something was a strap of leather that we today would call a belt. Did you know they make *stretchy* men’s belts these days? Gone are the days of having to poke an extra hole in your belt to get it to cinch up your burgeoning waistline just right!

 Agabus took *Paul’s* belt and hogtied his own hands and feet to illustrate what was going to happen to Paul if he persisted in his plan to go to Jerusalem. And if that sounds like an odd thing to do, I should point out here that God’s prophets were always doing things like that to illustrate what the message they were relaying from God. Consider what happened here:

 **“...when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem...*the prophet Ahijah* ...caught the new garment that was on him, *and rent it in twelve pieces:* And he said to Jeroboam, *Take thee ten pieces:* for thus saith the LORD...Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, *and will give ten tribes to thee”* (I Kings 11:29-31).**

As you may know, that’s exactly what happened. When Solomon’s son taxed the people of Israel too heavily, 10 of Israel’s 12 tribes rebelled against him and joined Jeroboam. And the prophet Ahijah not only predicted that would happen, he *illustrated* it in a way that is similar to what Agabus did. By the way, this is why pastors and Bible teachers use illustrations to illustrate what they teach. It’s because they know that some people need them to understand what’s being taught.

 We know that God knows this to be true as well, for He said,

 ***“I have...spoken by the prophets,* and I have multiplied visions, *and used similitudes,* by the ministry of the prophets” (Hosea 12:10).**

In other words, God told the prophets what to tell people, and then told them what similitude to use to illustrate it. Hey, if even a guy like the Apostle Paul could benefit from having God’s message illustrated for him, then illustrations probably help *all* of us on some level or another, whether we realize it or not. I say that because I know many Bible students who *don’t* need Bible truth illustrated, and they can find it actually distracting when preachers use them.

 But what Agabus said here answers the question of why Paul kept sailing toward Jerusalem when those prophets back in verse 4 said he should *not* go to Jerusalem. As Agabus makes clear here, it wasn’t that God was *forbidding* him to go. God was just telling him what would happen if he *did* go. Bonds and afflictions would abide him, just as those other Spirit-filled prophets had said.

 Now if you’re thinking that when Paul was told “he *should not* go up to Jerusalem” (v.4) that that sure *sounds* like God was forbidding him to go. But look now that phrase “should not” is used when those three kings went to the Lord’s baby shower and presented him with that gold, frankincense and myrrh. After they left, it says,

 **“...being warned of God in a dream that they *should not* return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way” (Matthew 2:12).**

Here I think that phrase “should not” was more of a *warning* than a *prohibitive commandment.* That is, I don’t think they would have been disobedient to God if they had decided to go back and tell King Herod that the *real* King of Israel had been born. God just knew that it would not have ended well for them if they did. And that’s what the prophets menat when they told Paul he should not go up to Jerusalem—that it wasn’t going to end well for *him* if he did.

 So why is Paul still wanting to go? Was he some kind of glutton for punishment? Of course not! Don’t forget, he wanted to go there *for Pentecost.* Pentecost was one of the 7 feasts that Jews *had* to attend every year, and Paul wanted to be there to preach to as many Jews as he could at one time—even if he had to be beaten and arrested by those bonds and afflictions to do it.

 We might compare this to what Paul told young Pastor Timothy in II Timothy 3:12, when he wrote:

 **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall suffer persecution.”***

Here the apostle wasn’t trying to tell Timothy *not* to live a godly life. He was just telling him what would happen if he did. And the Holy Spirit was just telling Paul what would happen if he went to Jerusalem.

 But Paul didn’t *care* what the consequences would be for serving the Lord! Of course, *his friends* did, and they *begged* him not to go in the next verse of Acts 21:

 **“And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem” (Acts 21:12).**

That word “we” there tells us that Luke was one of the ones who tried to talk Paul out of going to Jerusalem, out of his great love for him. And I’m sure they all meant well, but they were just making it harder for Paul to be faithful to the mission he had in mind, as we see in verse 13:

 **“Then Paul answered, 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” (Acts 21:13).**

Now here I should point out that I personally think that Paul wasn’t just *ready* to die in Jerusalem; I think he *expected* to. Remember what he told the Ephesian elders just one chapter ago?

 **“I *know* that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, *shall see my face no more”* (Acts 20:25).**

I think this shows that Paul really thought that he’d have to pay for the chance to preach to those Jews *with his life—*and here his friends were trying to talk him out of it! That ought to remind you of what happened when the Lord told Peter that *He* would have to die in Jerusalem:

 **“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, *how that He must go unto Jerusalem...and be killed,* and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: *this shall not be unto Thee.* But He...said unto Peter, *Get thee behind Me, Satan...*for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Matthew 16:21-13).**

The Lord told Peter, “If I want to die serving God, then that’s My business! Don’t be trying to talk Me out of it.”

 This reminds me of how, many years ago, I told a friend that I drink one of those popular 5 Hour Energy drinks every morning. When he responded that those things are bad for you, I said that *coffee* is bad for you if you drink too much of it, and I was willing to take the risk, because it helps me think better when I study the Scriptures to prepare my messages.

 Now I’m not saying that we should act irresponsibly. I’m just saying that at some point we have to say what Paul said when he was warned about those bonds and afflictions that awaited him in Jerusalem:

 **“...none of these things move me, *neither count I my life dear unto myself,* so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, *to testify the gospel of the grace of God”* (Acs 20:24).**

Compare that to what the devil said to God in Job 2:4:

 **“Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, *all that a man hath will he give for his life.”***

That’s what the devil thinks of us! He thinks we value our lives more than serving the Lord. But he found out that *Job* was made of better stuff, and he found that out about Paul as well! Paul said he was willing to *give* his life for the Lord, not give all that he had to save it as the devil said.

 And you can determine to do that too. You can be like the guy Paul talked to the Philippians about:

 **“Epaphroditus....your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants...was...sick nigh unto death...*for the work of Christ* he was nigh unto death, *not regarding his life...”* (Philippians 2:25,27,30).**

That ol’ boy nearly worked himself to death being Paul’s gopher, and the messenger who carried their letters to Paul and his letters to them.

 And you women can get in on this too! Serving the Lord nigh unto death isn’t just an old boy’s club thing. When Haman tried to kill all the Jews in the kingdom, look what Esther said in Esther 4:16:

 **“I...will...go in unto the king, *which is not according to the law:* and if I perish, *I perish.”***

If you know the story there, you know that in those days you couldn’t go barging in on the king to ask a favor, even if you were the king’s wife. You had to wait for the king to summon you. But Esther was willing to risk *death itself* to serve the Lord by saving His people.

 And so was Aquila’s wife over in the New Testament. Paul wrote of her,

 **“Priscilla and Aquila *my helpers in Christ Jesus*...have for my life *laid down their own necks:* unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles” (Romans 16:3,4).**

So if you ladies want Christians thanking God for *you,* you can’t always play it safe in life, even if you’re a woman. Of course, a lot of that depends on how rough the times in which you live are when it comes to serving the Lord in ways that are nigh unto death.

 Well, I guess Paul was finally able to help his friends see that you can’t always play it safe in life, for the next verse in our passage says,

 **“And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done” (Acts 21:14).**

Now they weren’t saying, “Well, I guess whatever’s going to happen will happen.” They already *knew* what was going to happen. They already knew that if Paul went to Jerusalem, he’d be beaten and arrested. They were saying, “If that’s the will of the Lord, then the will of the Lord be done! Let Paul go and get himself beaten and arrested.”

 But what they *didn’t* say was, “Okay, Paul, you go and get yourself beaten and arrested. We’ll stay here and *not* get beaten and arrested.” Instead, they decided to go with him!

**“And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem (Acts 21:15).**

Now once again, that word “we” there means that after Luke couldn’t keep Paul from going, he and the rest of Paul’s friends decided to go and get beaten and arrested *with* Paul! That should remind you of what happened in John 11 where, speaking of the Lord Jesus, we read,

 **“...saith He to His disciples, *Let us go into Judaea again.* His disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to *stone* Thee; and goest Thou thither again?...Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, *that we may die with Him”* (John 11:7,8,16).**

When Thomas knew that he couldn’t talk the Lord out of going to a place where people might *kill* Him, he turned to the rest of the 12 apostles and said, “Let’s go die with Him!”

 And that’s what Luke and the boys are doing here in our text. If they couldn’t talk Paul out of going to die, they were going to go die with him! We need more of that kind of spirit, the kind we read about when this guy said to King David,

 ***“As the LORD liveth,* and as my lord the king liveth, *surely in what place my lord the king shall be,* whether in death or life, *even there also will thy servant be”* (II Samuel 15:21).**

Now that’s standing by the Lord, and the Lord’s man!

 You know, when you see a believer living a godly life, you can say to him, “You go and get yourself persecuted if you want to, but I’m going to sit here and *not* get persecuted by *not* living a godly life in Christ Jesus.” But remember, the only kind of persecution you’re likely to get living in the United States in this day and age is the *mocking* kind that Ishmael gave Isaac. So be willing to pay the price for serving the Lord like Paul was. You do want to be like Paul, don’t you?

 Now those “carriages” we read about there in verse 4 were not the kind of carriages people ride in. Paul wasn’t riding in a fancy carriage, like Rhett Butler and Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone With the Wind* after they made their fortune together. Luke’s talking about their *luggage,* the *suitcases* they were *carrying.* When you fly these days, you can either check your bags, or *carry* them on the plane with you. If you do, they call those bags your *carry-ons.* But in the Bible, they’re called *carriages,* which is actually a better word when you consider that the word *carrion* sounds like something that vultures and buzzards eat.

 But now, anytime anybody traveled anywhere in the Bible, they had to have had luggage, and this almost always goes without saying. So how come Luke went out of his way to mention their baggage here?

 The answer lies in what was *in* those carriages. You see, they were filled with *money—*the money Paul had collected from Gentile churches for what Romans 15:26 calls “the *poor* saints which are *at Jerusalem.”* That tells you just how much money Paul had collected for them. We’re talking about *suitcases* full of money, *trunks* filled with cash.

And Paul and his entourage had a plan about how to *distribute* that money once they got to Jerusalem. They brought along a guy to help them with that, as we see in verse 16:

 **“There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge” (Acts 21:16).**

As you can see, they brought along a man who lived in Jerusalem, a man who had been a disciple for so long that he was probably well known by all the *other* disciples in Jerusalem, *and knew where he lived.* And when word got out that Paul was distributing money from his house, they would all know where to go in Jerusalem to get it. And if you don’t think those poor saints were glad Paul came, take a look at what the last verse of our text says in Acts 21:17:

 **“And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.”**

Those poor saints considered Paul a *godsend,* because that’s exactly what he was!

 But here I have to point out that Paul hadn’t been bound and determined to go to Jerusalem just to help some poor people with a relief package. Remember, he was going there to preach to that huge crowd of Jews at Pentecost—*knowing* that when those *unsaved* Jews heard about the money he was giving *saved* Jews that they’d be *much* more apt to listen to him when he told them about Christ!

 You see, all unsaved Jews knew about Paul was that he was a dirty turncoat traitor who had turned his back on Judaism and was out preaching that phony Messiah Jesus Christ to all those icky Gentiles. But Paul knew that if they saw the Phony’s Gentiles *helping Jews,* they would think, “Maybe He’s the Messiah after all! Paul knew that this was a *once in a lifetime opportunity,* and he was willing to *die* to take advantage of it.

 In closing, you never know when *your* once in a lifetime opportunity to serve the Lord will come, but someday it will. Don’t you want to be sure you take advantage of it when it gets here? There’s only one way to do it, and that is to take advantage of all the *smaller* opportunities you have to serve the Lord in the meantime. Praying about it in advance will help as well, so why not bow your head and talk to the Lord about it? You’ll be eternally glad you did.