ACTS 21

Ready to Die for the Name

tears on a beach at Tyre, a prophet with a belt at Caesarea, and a riot in the temple courts

> *“Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.””*
> ACTS 21:13

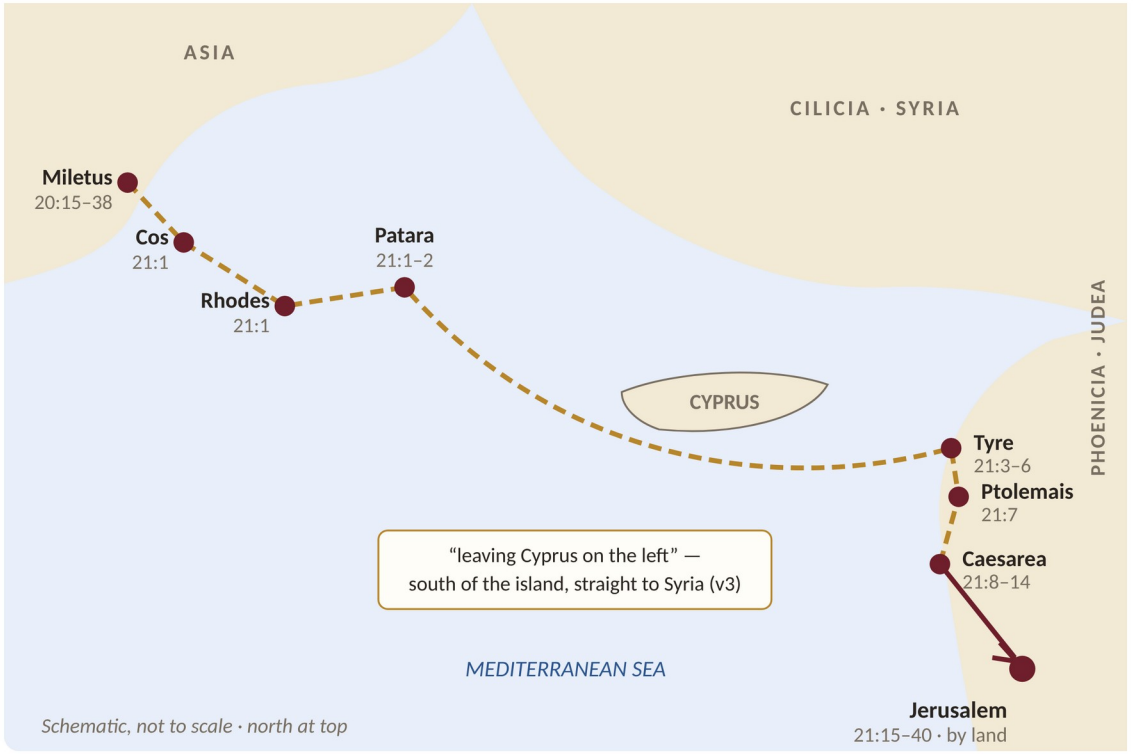
A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where Luke has brought us

1. Acts 20 ended on a beach at Miletus, where the Ephesian elders wept and kissed Paul, “grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again” (20:38).

2. Paul was carrying something with him.

3. The church in Jerusalem had grown into “many thousands” of Jewish believers, “all zealous for the Law” (v. 20).



Through the Spirit, Not to Set Foot

A straight course to Tyre, seven days with the disciples, and prayer on the beach

ACTS 21:4

After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.

DAVID GUZIK

A human interpretation of a true warning; Paul was persuaded it was God's will.

R.C. SPROUL

God's hidden will is hidden; all I can do is read God's Word.

MATTHEW HENRY

He sought out the disciples; they knelt on the shore and prayed.

διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος
DIA TOU PNEUMATOS · "THROUGH THE SPIRIT"

The same Spirit who "bound" Paul to go (20:22) now speaks through the disciples at Tyre.

Ready to Die for the Name

Philip's house, Agabus and the belt, tears that cannot turn him back

ACTS 21:11

And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

DAVID GUZIK

Warnings to prepare Paul, not to stop him; choose God's will.

R.C. SPROUL

He did not retreat; follow his submission to the will of God.

C.H. SPURGEON

Ready to suffer is more than ready to serve — ready for whatever God appoints.

MATTHEW HENRY

What we see strikes deeper; say, The will of the Lord be done.

ζώνη
ZŌNĒ · "BELT"

A belt or girdle — the long cloth sash a man wore around his waist, sometimes with money tucked in it (Mark 6:8).

Zealous for the Law

James and the elders, a rumor about Moses, and four men under a vow

ACTS 21:20

And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law;

DAVID GUZIK

Customs dangerous only when trusted for salvation; no atonement in it.

MATTHEW HENRY

The Law dead but not buried; Paul might do well and yet suffer.

ζηλωτής

ZĒLŌTĒS · "ZEALOUS ONE, ZEALOT"

A noun: "they are all zealots for the Law" (v. 20).

Away with Him!

Jews from Asia, a false charge, a Roman rescue, and a hush on the stairs

ACTS 21:40

When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,

DAVID GUZIK

False charge, Roman rescue; “Remove him from the earth” (Boice).

C.H. SPURGEON

Ready for all slander and reproach — faithful to God.

MATTHEW HENRY

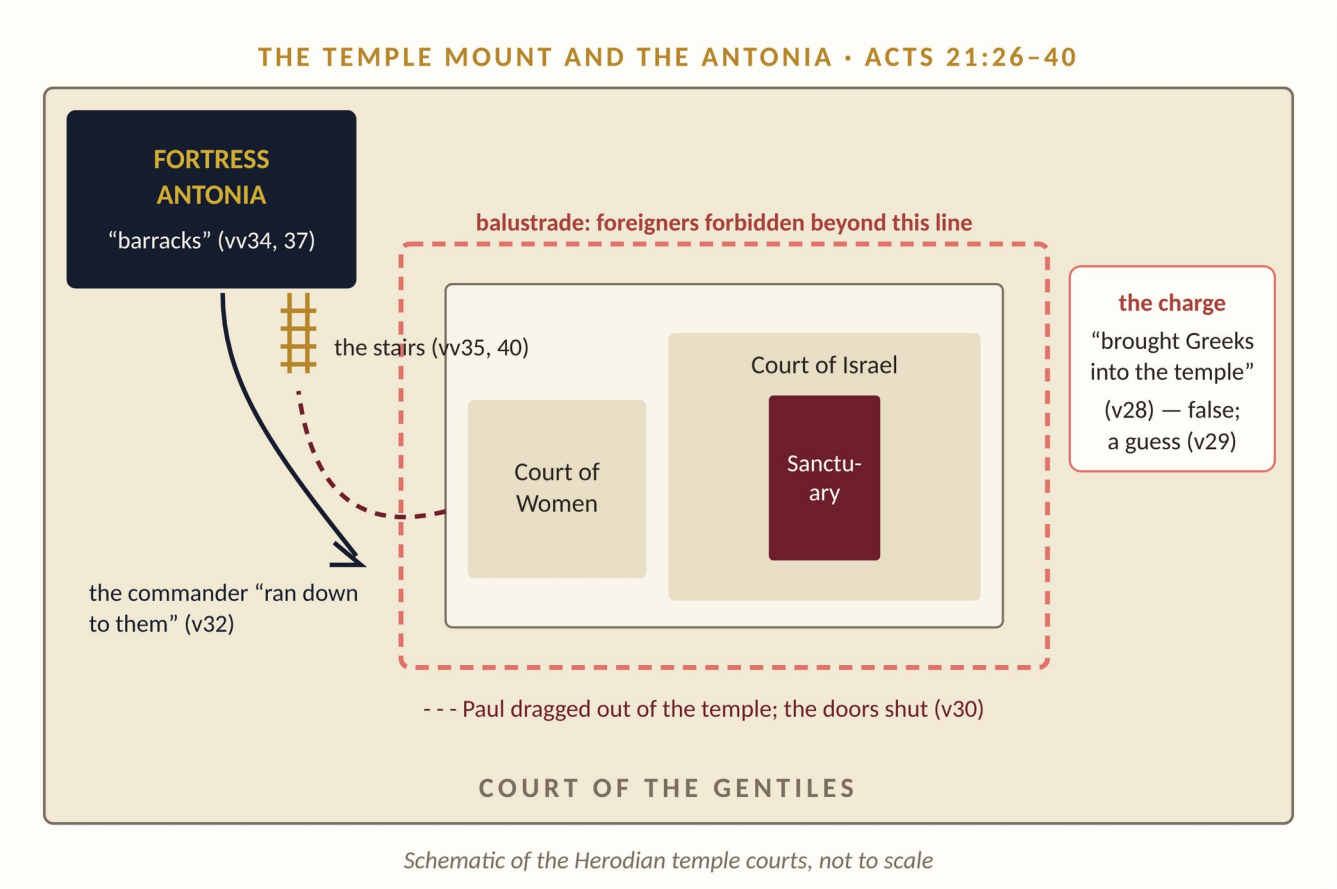
Innocency is no fence against false accusation.

κοινόω

KOINOŌ · “DEFILE, MAKE COMMON”

From koinos, “common.” The charge in verse 28 is that Paul “has made this holy place common” by bringing Greeks inside.

The temple courts and the Antonia



Schematic of the Herodian temple courts, not to scale

The mob's charge was that Paul took a Gentile past the red line; see how close the Roman fortress stood, and the stairs from which Paul spoke.

What to carry from this chapter

1

A true warning, a wrong conclusion.

The Spirit told the disciples at Tyre what was coming; they concluded “don’t go.”

2

Warnings prepare; they don’t always stop.

Guzik: “The warnings from the Holy Spirit were intended to prepare Paul, not to stop him.”

3

Prayer on a beach.

Men, wives and children knelt on the sand at Tyre.

4

Ready to suffer is more than ready to serve.

Spurgeon: “You have not come to the highest style of readiness until you are ready for whatever the will of God may appoint for you.”

More to carry

5

“The will of the Lord be done.”

The friends’ last word echoes Gethsemane (Luke 22:42).

6

An old disciple.

Mnason of Cyprus, “a disciple of long standing” (v16), opened his home to a Gentile-heavy team.

7

Apostasy from Moses?

The rumor used apostasia (v21), the word of 2 Thess 2:3.

8

Doing right does not guarantee safety.

Henry: “Paul might do well, and yet suffer for it.”

Talk it through

1. The believers at Tyre heard a true warning and drew the wrong conclusion. When have I taken something true about God and drawn a conclusion He never said?

2. Paul's friends loved him and begged him to play it safe. Who in my life loves me enough to cry over me — and how do I tell love from God's leading?

3. "I am ready … even to die … for the name of the Lord Jesus." What am I ready for this week, and what am I not ready for yet?

4. The elders asked Paul to give up something he was free to keep, for the sake of Jewish brothers. Where might I lay down a freedom to keep the peace without giving up the gospel?

5. Paul did the right thing and got arrested anyway. How do I keep trusting God when obedience makes things worse before it makes them better?

CLOSING

Acts 21 is a chapter of tears and chains. Everyone who loved Paul could see the danger; Paul could see it too, and went anyway, because the will of the Lord mattered more to him than his own safety. The chains came — and the Lord used even Roman chains to carry His witness up the stairs, and on to Rome.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study and reflection journal: see the Acts study page.