

Acts 21:1-16

1-2 "Torn ourselves away" This is the same verb used in the Septuagint version of Isaiah 28:9. Cos was a nearby island. From there it was 60 miles to Rhodes, another island. The harbor once had a 100' tall statue of the sun god Helios, also known as Colossus. It was one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world but was destroyed by an earthquake in the 3rd century BC. Patara was an important city in the Roman province of Lycia. The port was important in the route of shipping grain from Alexandria. There, Paul found a cargo ship headed straight for Phoenicia. It would be a three to five day trip depending on the wind.

3-4 Every place Paul has visited the churches, he receives a warning, including here in Tyre. The Spirit warns of what is to happen and the people assume Paul should not go. But Paul is convinced that the Spirit is leading him there in spite of what he will endure for the sake of Christ. We should be careful not to discourage people from doing what they are convinced is God's calling.

5 What a beautiful picture of brotherly love and concern we should have for one another. (1Peter 1:22)

6 –7 This is the Old Testament city of Acco. Nero made the city a Roman colony. The Gentiles of the city were very anti-Semitic. Only 9 years later, the Gentile population would massacre 2000 Jews. Paul found a group of believers in this city too.

8 This is the only time in the book of Acts that the term "Evangelist" is used. Philip was used by the Lord to win the Samaritans, the Ethiopian eunuch, (8:40) and probably many in this Roman city. He was apparently successful enough to have a house that was large enough to host the 9 brothers. We wonder if he told Luke many stories of the early church that became a part of the earlier chapters of Acts. Many Jews in Caesarea were killed in the first Jewish revolt. He may have been forced to move by the violence and destruction of that conflict.

9 Eusebius reported that an Ephesian church elder told of Philip later moving with his daughters to Hieropolis. Two of the daughters never married, another "lived in the Holy Spirit and rests in Ephesus". (Joel 2:28) They prophesied. (1Corinthians 11:5) Though women did not hold the office of elder, they did pray and prophesy in the church. We don't know if this was predictions of future events such as the churches warning Paul about what would happen in Jerusalem, or speaking a timely word of Scripture or encouragement from the Holy Spirit.

10-11 (see 11:27-28) The Spirit led Agabus to act out his prophecy. Some of the Old Testament prophets were also led to act out in drama form what was coming. (1Samuel 15:27-28)

12-13 Like the other churches, out of love for Paul, they tried to dissuade him from going. This affected Paul deeply. The term he used is the same as is used for women using rocks to pound their clothes as they wash them.

14 Paul was determined that this was the Spirit's leading. They could not change his mind, so they put it in God's hands. We can relate to their desire to not see a brother in Christ suffer, but we can also relate to their surrendering to God's will.

15 The term in this verse for getting ready is used in saddling and packing horses. It may imply that they made the 64 mile trip on horseback.

16 The disciples that accompanied them may have done so to return the horses. Mnason – an early disciple with the gift of hospitality. That may mean that he was one of the 120 in Acts 1:15, or one of the converts in or around that first Pentecost, or one of Paul's first converts. He would have been another valuable source of information for Luke.

This is a passage that tells about some of the details of a journey, a journey that will end in Paul's incarceration. We see some things in it that we can learn from. Wherever we go in this world, we should look up the local church and see if we can be a blessing and be blessed by the visit.

Philip's daughters can also teach us that women have an important role in the church. Women who are full of the Holy Spirit can bring a word from the Spirit that can encourage and comfort other believers. This is often expressed in the form of Scripture that speaks to our hearts. 1Corinthians 14:3