SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Acts

Chapter Twenty-One, Verses 1–40

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

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Friends weep, a prophet binds his own hands and feet with Paul's belt, and the apostle answers, "I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Within days a false rumor fills the temple courts, a mob drags him out, and Roman soldiers carry him up the stairs in chains. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Acts 21:1–40

voyage · warning · vow · riot

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Four movements from the harbor at Tyre to the stairs of the Roman barracks

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"The will of the Lord be done!" — Acts 21:14

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Acts 21:1–40

Ready to Die for the Name — Paul goes up to Jerusalem knowing chains are waiting — and the chains come

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Acts 21 in 4 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ACTS 21:13

"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."""

† Before the Passage

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). He had already told them, "bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me" (20:22–23). Chapter 21 is that journey and that arrival. The "we" of verse 1 tells us Luke himself was on board.

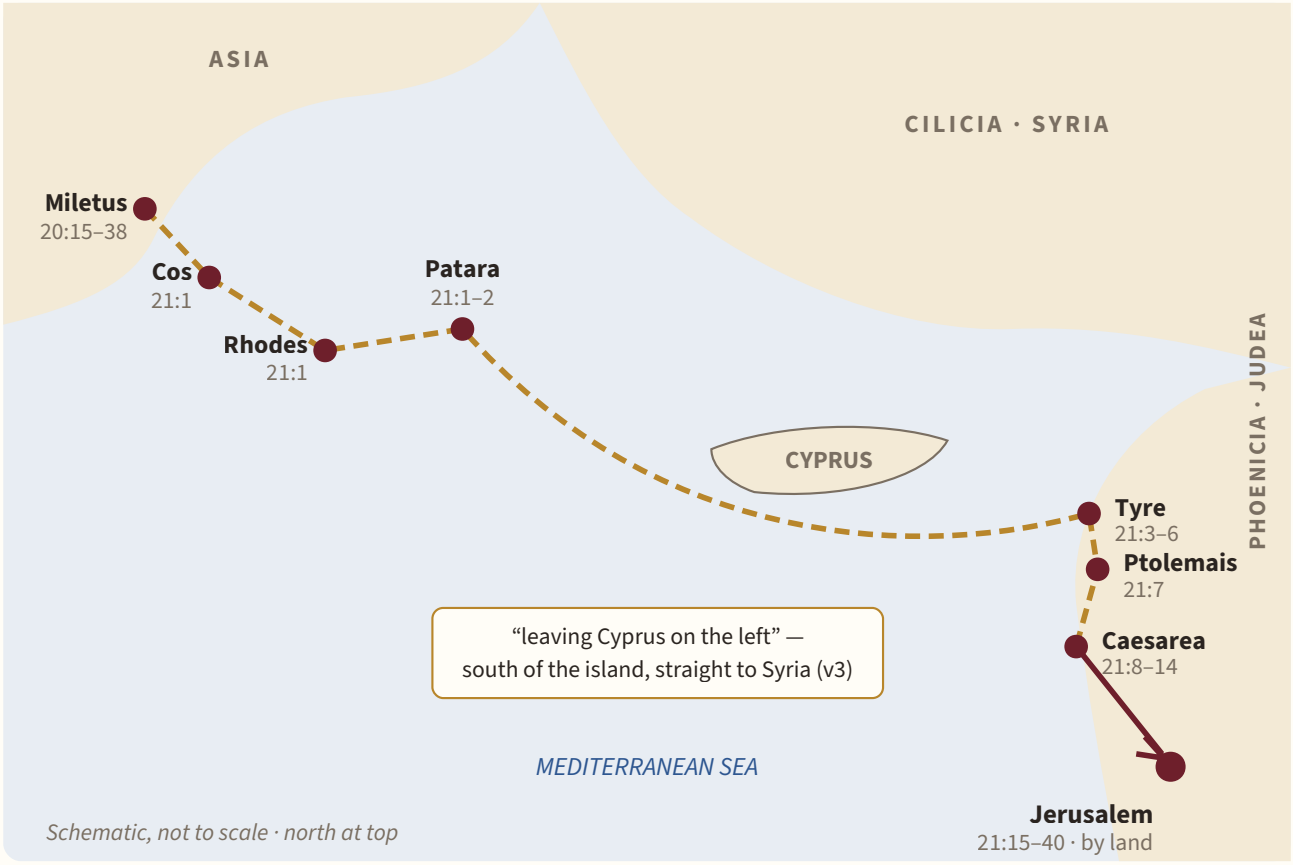
Paul was carrying something with him. He later told Felix, "after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings" (24:17) — the collection from the Gentile churches of Macedonia, Achaia and Asia for the poor believers in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25–26). His traveling companions included Trophimus of Asia (20:4) — "the Ephesian" of 21:29 — whose presence in the city sets off the riot in verse 29. Pentecost was

close (20:16), and Jerusalem would be full of pilgrims — including Jews from Asia who knew Paul from Ephesus.

The church in Jerusalem had grown into "many thousands" of Jewish believers, "all zealous for the Law" (v. 20). Years before, the council of Acts 15 had settled that Gentiles were not to be put under circumcision and the Law of Moses (15:28–29). But rumors had reached Jerusalem that Paul was telling Jews to stop circumcising their sons. The elders' answer is a Nazirite-style vow (Numbers 6), with its seven days of purification, its shaved heads and its offerings in the temple.

The temple was a place of sharp lines. Gentiles could stand in the outer court, but a stone balustrade marked off the inner courts, and notices warned foreigners not to pass it. On the northwest corner stood the Fortress Antonia, where the Roman cohort kept watch on the courts during the feasts, with stairs leading down into the temple area. Luke names those stairs twice (vv. 35, 40), and from them Paul will speak to the crowd that has just tried to kill him.

FIGURE · FROM MILETUS TO JERUSALEM



Follow the dotted line: island-hopping down the coast of Asia, a straight run past Cyprus to Tyre, short hops to Caesarea, then the road up to Jerusalem.

I
MOVEMENT

ACTS 21:1–6

Through the Spirit, Not to Set Foot

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

> *1 When we had parted from them and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara; 2 and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. 3 When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo. 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. 5 When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. 6 Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again.*
>
> ACTS 21:1–6

> *"And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me."*
>
> ACTS 20:22–23

διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος

DIA TOU PNEUMATOS · "THROUGH THE SPIRIT" · G4151

The same Spirit who "bound" Paul to go (20:22) now speaks through the disciples at Tyre. The puzzle is plain: they "kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem." Luke uses the imperfect — they said it over and over for seven days. Most teachers, Guzik among them, separate what the Spirit revealed (suffering ahead, 20:23) from what loving friends concluded from it (so don't go). The Spirit does not contradict Himself; the inference was theirs.

ἐπιβαίνω

EPIBAINŌ · "SET FOOT, GO UP" · G1910

To step on, to go aboard, to go up into. Luke uses it in verse 2 ("we went aboard") and verse 4 ("not to set foot in Jerusalem"), and again of Festus "having arrived in the province" (25:1). The word ties the voyage together: Paul steps onto ship after ship, and the one place his friends beg him not to step is the place he is bound for.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik does not think Paul disobeyed the Spirit at Tyre. The Spirit had shown real danger, and the disciples' "do not go" was "a human interpretation of the Holy Spirit's prophecy of the danger that awaited Paul." "Otherwise it is difficult to see why Paul would have gone against the Holy Spirit's direction" — the same Spirit had been telling him in every city that chains were waiting. So Paul listened, weighed the warning, and kept going: "He was persuaded it was God's will, so they continued." Warnings do not always mean "stop."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's sermon on these verses ("Thy Will Be Done," Acts 21:1–14) is not online in transcript, but his Ligonier teaching on the will of God speaks to the Tyre puzzle. He distinguishes God's hidden, "decretive" will — "that will of God by which God sovereignly brings to pass whatsoever He wills" — from His revealed, "preceptive" will in Scripture. We are not handed the hidden plan: "All I can do is read God's Word." "The hidden will of God is none of your business. That's why it's hidden." Paul's friends saw the danger; they did not see the plan.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notices Paul's habit at every stop: "Wherever Paul came, he enquired what disciples were there, found them out, and associated with them." He records how the Tyre believers, out of love, "begged of him that he would not go up to Jerusalem." The farewell moves him most. Whole families walked Paul to the water, and "They kneeled down on the shore, though we may suppose it either stony or dirty, and there prayed." And he draws a rule for travelers: "Those that are going to sea should, when they quit the shore, commit themselves to God by prayer."

II
MOVEMENT

ACTS 21:7–16

Ready to Die for the Name

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

7 *When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed*
with them for a day. 8 *On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the*
evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. 9 *Now this man had four virgin daughters who were*
prophetesses. 10 *As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.* 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.'" 12 *When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go*
up to Jerusalem. 13 *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." 14 *And since he would*
not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!" 15 *After these days we got ready and*
started on our way up to Jerusalem. 16 *Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to*
Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge.

ACTS 21:7–16

"saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.""

LUKE 22:42

ζώνη

ZŌNĒ · "BELT" · G2223

A belt or girdle — the long cloth sash a man wore around his waist, sometimes with money tucked in it (Mark 6:8). Agabus acts out his message the way the prophets did (Jeremiah buried a waistband, Jer 13:1–11; Ezekiel lay on his side, Ezek 4). Agabus had foretold the famine in Acts 11:28; now he ties his own hands and feet and says, "This is what the Holy Spirit says." Henry: what we see makes a greater impression than what we only hear.

ἑτοίμως

HETOIMŌS · "READY, IN READINESS" · G2093

An adverb from *hetoimos*, "prepared." Paul says literally, "I hold readily" — *hetoimōs echō* — not only to be bound but to die. The word is rare in the New Testament; Paul uses it again of being ready to come to Corinth (2 Cor 12:14), and Peter of the Judge "ready to judge" (1 Pet 4:5). Spurgeon built a whole sermon, "Paul the Ready," on Paul's "I am ready" sayings, this one among them.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that Philip had four daughters who prophesied, yet the warning came through Agabus: "The Holy Spirit could have used them, but He chose to use someone else." Agabus' prophecy was true, but its purpose was not to turn Paul back: "The warnings from the Holy Spirit were intended to prepare Paul, not to stop him." Paul's resolve "was not a result of rebellion, but an obedient response to the command of the Holy Spirit in his heart." Guzik quotes Chambers: "No healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Ligonier's description of Sproul's sermon on Acts 21:1–14 sums up its burden: "Warned of the suffering that awaited him, the Apostle Paul did not retreat. He resolved to go forward, even if it meant dying for his devotion to Christ." The sermon, it says, "exhorts us to follow Paul's submission to the will of God," and the series page frames it this way: "The people of God are always faced with two choices in life." Sproul's teaching on God's will explains the friends' final words — we bow to a sovereign will we cannot see, and obey the one we can read.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Paul the Ready" (No. 2285, 1890) sets verse 13 beside Paul's readiness to preach (Rom 1:15) and to depart (2 Tim 4:6): "This is perhaps a greater thing than the former one; to be ready to suffer is more than to be ready to serve." "Everyone told him that he would have bonds and imprisonment, and perhaps death; but he cared nothing about all that; he said, "I am ready, I am ready."" He presses it on ordinary believers: "You have not come to the highest style of readiness until you are ready for whatever the will of God may appoint for you." And: "It is not dying that is the great difficulty; it is living."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads Philip's prophesying daughters as Joel's promise coming true, and Agabus' acted prophecy as wise teaching, "because that which we see usually makes a greater impression upon us than that which we only hear of." Paul's answer means he is ready "not only to lose my liberty, but to lose my life." When his friends stop pleading, Henry turns their words into a rule for every trial we cannot prevent: "it becomes us to say, The will of the Lord be done." Of Mnason he says, "It is an honourable thing to be an old disciple of Jesus Christ."

III
MOVEMENT

ACTS 21:17–26

Zealous for the Law

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

17 *After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.* 18 *And the following day Paul went in with us*
to James, and all the elders were present. 19 *After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things*
which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 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; 21 *and they have been told about you,*
that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise
their children nor to walk according to the customs. 22 *"What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that*
you have come. 23 *"Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow;* 24 *take them and*
purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know
that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly,
keeping the Law. 25 *"But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should*
abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication." 26 *Then*
Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of
the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.

ACTS 21:17–26

"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

ACTS 15:28–29

"Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved."

1 CORINTHIANS 10:32–33

ζηλωτής

ZĒLŌTĒS · "ZEALOUS ONE, ZEALOT" · G2207

A noun: "they are all zealots for the Law" (v. 20). The same word names Simon "the Zealot" (Luke 6:15) and Paul's own past — "being zealous for God just as you all are today" (22:3). Zeal for the Law was not the problem in itself; Paul had it, and Titus 2:14 calls Christ's people "zealous for good deeds." The danger was zeal that could believe a rumor and, a few days later, riot.

ἀποστασία

APOSTASIA · "FORSAKING, APOSTASY" · G646

The rumor was that Paul taught Jews "apostasy from Moses" — the noun behind our word "apostasy." It appears only twice in the New Testament: here, and in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 of the great "apostasy" before the Day of the Lord. The charge was false. Paul had circumcised Timothy (16:3) and kept a vow himself (18:18); what he refused was to make the Law a condition of salvation for anyone.

ἁγνίζω

HAGNIZŌ · "PURIFY" · G48

To cleanse ceremonially. Used of pilgrims purifying themselves before Passover (John 11:55), of Paul here (vv. 24, 26) and in 24:18 ("having been purified"), and morally in James 4:8 and 1 Peter 1:22. Guzik insists the offering at the end of the days "was not in any way for the purpose of atonement or forgiveness."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that James and the elders rejoice first, and only then raise the problem — "how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law." Jewish believers keeping customs was not the issue: "there was never a hint that such things would be required of Gentiles as a test of righteousness." With Clarke, he says such customs "were only dangerous when they depended on them for salvation." He reports that "Many commentators believe this was a terrible compromise on Paul's part; that he was a hypocrite," but he defends Paul from 1 Corinthians 9:20, since the offering "was not in any way for the purpose of atonement or forgiveness."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry gives both sides honestly. The ceremonial law, he says, was in a strange state: "It was dead, but not buried; dead, but not yet deadly." Some judge that pressing Paul into the vow "seems to have more in it of fleshly wisdom than of the grace of God." Henry himself leans toward Paul's freedom to become "as a Jew" to win Jews, and lands on a sober verdict that fits the rest of the chapter: "Paul might do well, and yet suffer for it." The plan meant to calm the rumor became the occasion of his arrest.

IV
MOVEMENT

ACTS 21:27–40

Away with Him!

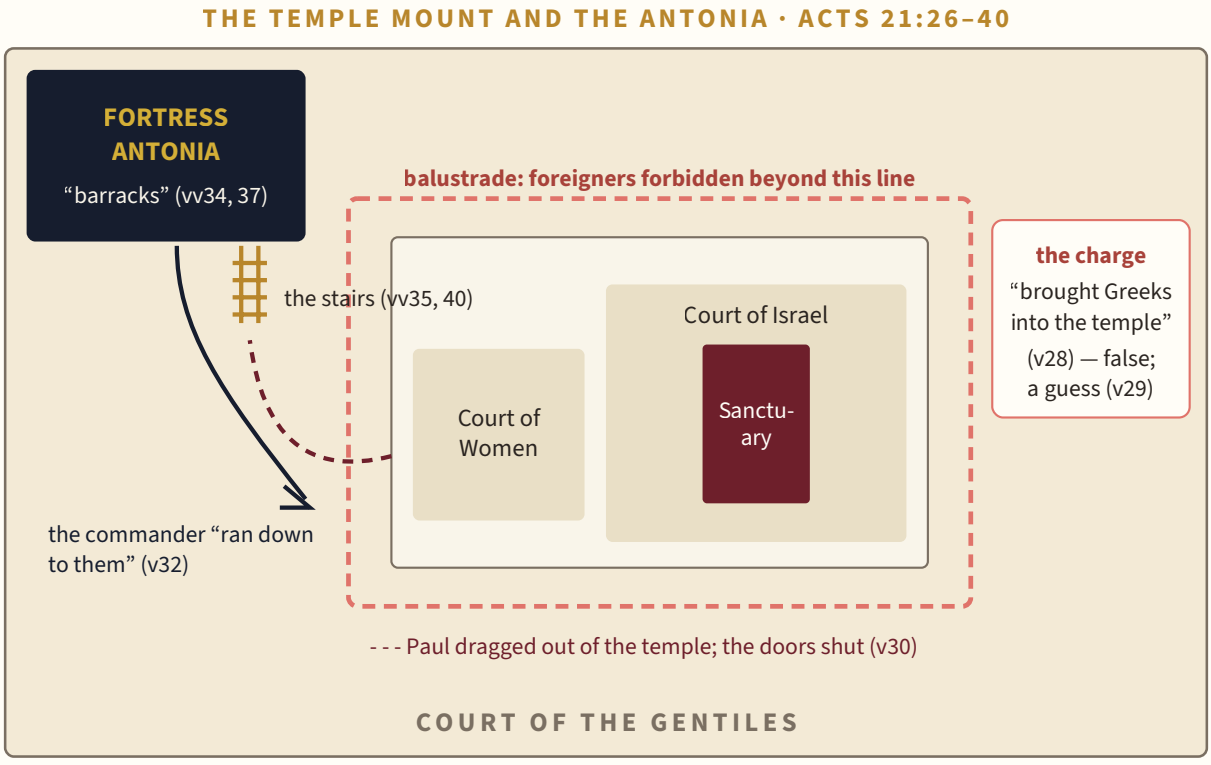
Jews from Asia, a false charge, a Roman rescue, and a hush on the stairs

27 *When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the* ↻ *temple*, *began to stir up*
all the crowd and laid hands on him, 28 *crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches*
to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into
the ↻ *temple* *and* ⚠ *has defiled this holy place*." 29 *For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the*
city with him, and ⚠ *they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple*. 30 *Then all the city was provoked,*
and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the ↻ *temple*, *and immediately*
the doors were shut. 31 ⚠ *While they were seeking to kill him*, *a report came up to the commander of the Roman*
cohort that all ↻ *Jerusalem* *was in confusion.* 32 *At once he took along some soldiers and centurions and ran*
down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 *Then the*
commander came up and took hold of him, and ◷ *ordered him to be bound with two chains*; *and he began asking*

> *who he was and what he had done.* [34] *But among the crowd some were shouting one thing and some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks.* [35] *When he got to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob;* [36] *for the multitude of the people kept following them, shouting, "⚠ Away with him!"* [37] *As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek?* [38] *"Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?"* [39] *But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people."* [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,*
>
> ACTS 21:27–40

> *"But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!""*
>
> LUKE 23:18

FIGURE · 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.

κοινόω

KOINOŌ · "DEFILE, MAKE COMMON" · G2840

From *koinos*, "common." The charge in verse 28 is that Paul "has made this holy place common" by bringing Greeks inside. It is the word of Peter's vision — "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy (*koinou*)" (10:15) — and of Jesus on what truly defiles a man (Mark 7:15). The irony is sharp: the men shouting about defilement were beating a man inside the temple courts.

αἶρε

AIRE · "AWAY WITH (HIM)!" · G142

The imperative of *airō*, to lift up and take away. The exact form *aire* occurs three times in the New Testament: the crowd before Pilate ("Away with this man," Luke 23:18), this crowd (21:36), and the same crowd again ("Away with such a fellow from the earth," 22:22). Bruce, quoted by Guzik: it "was the shout with which Jesus' death had been demanded not far from that spot some twenty-seven years before."

σικάριος

SIKARIOS · "ASSASSIN, DAGGER-MAN" · G4607

From the Latin *sica*, a curved dagger — men who mingled with crowds and stabbed their enemies. This is its only New Testament use. The commander assumes the troublemaker must be "the Egyptian" who had led "four thousand men of the Assassins" into the wilderness (v. 38). Paul answers in educated Greek, and then turns to the crowd in "the Hebrew dialect" (*Hebraïs*, G1446; only 21:40; 22:2; 26:14).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads the Asian Jews' charges as false — Paul had been seen with "Trophimus the Ephesian" in the city, not in the temple — and the Roman arrest as protection: "When they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul." Boice explains the crowd's cry: "They did not mean, 'Take him away from the temple area.' They meant, 'Remove him from the earth.' They wanted him dead." The commander "was surprised that Paul was an educated man and could speak Greek," having taken him for the Egyptian who "led a ragged army of four thousand men to the Mount of Olives." Then "Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Paul the Ready" presses verse 13's readiness onto scenes like this one, where a faithful man is slandered and beaten for things he did not do. "Beloved friends, are we ready to be scoffed at, to be thought idiots, to be put down among old-fashioned fossils?" "I wish we were ready for all danger, all slander, all reproach, all poverty." What steadies such a man is not courage of his own: "Ah, dear friends, it is nothing but keeping faithful to God that will enable you to treat death as a friend!"

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry sees the whole uproar built on a guess. "Innocency is no fence against calumny and false accusation," and Paul's careful obedience in the vow did not protect him. The commander could get no straight answer from the shouting crowd: "Those that will hearken to the clamours of the multitude will know nothing for a certainty." The mob followed, "crying, Away with him," and yet Henry notes the calm of the prisoner who asks, in chains, to speak to the very people who had just tried to kill him.

V
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From the Lord's word to Ananias to Paul's last letter

> *"But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.""*
>
> ACTS 9:15–16

> *"When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;"*
>
> LUKE 9:51

> *"It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions."*
>
> JOEL 2:28

> *"But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."*
>
> ACTS 20:24

> *"So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar.""*
>
> JOHN 19:15

> *"But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.""*
>
> ACTS 23:11

> *"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;"*
>
> 2 TIMOTHY 4:6–7

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik, with Bruce, hears the Passion in the mob's shout: "Away with him!" was the cry raised against Jesus near the same spot years before. Like his Lord, Paul set his face toward Jerusalem.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the text and weighs the hard questions — did Paul disobey the Spirit? was the vow a compromise? — and answers no to both; Henry gives both sides of the vow and turns each scene into counsel; Spurgeon preaches Paul's "I am ready"; Sproul's Acts 21 sermons are not online in transcript, so his voice comes from his teaching on the will of God. They agree that Paul went up as an obedient servant, not a stubborn one.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The warning at Tyre	A human interpretation of a true warning; Paul was persuaded it was God's will.	God's hidden will is hidden; all I can do is read God's Word.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	He sought out the disciples; they knelt on the shore and prayed.
II · Agabus and the belt	Warnings to prepare Paul, not to stop him; choose God's will.	He did not retreat; follow his submission to the will of God.	Ready to suffer is more than ready to serve — ready for whatever God appoints.	What we see strikes deeper; say, The will of the Lord be done.
III · James and the vow	Customs dangerous only when trusted for salvation; no atonement in it.	— (sermon not online in transcript)	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	The Law dead but not buried; Paul might do well and yet suffer.
IV · The riot and the stairs	False charge, Roman rescue; "Remove him from the earth" (Boice).	— (sermon "Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem" not online in transcript)	Ready for all slander and reproach — faithful to God.	Innocency is no fence against false accusation.

ACTS 21:1–40 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **A true warning, a wrong conclusion.** The Spirit told the disciples at Tyre what was coming; they concluded "don't go." Guzik: "a human interpretation of the Holy Spirit's prophecy." Paul heard the same Spirit say "bonds and afflictions" in every city (20:23) — and went. GUZIK
- **Warnings prepare; they don't always stop.** Guzik: "The warnings from the Holy Spirit were intended to prepare Paul, not to stop him." A man can know trouble is coming and still be in the will of God walking into it. GUZIK
- **Prayer on a beach.** Men, wives and children knelt on the sand at Tyre. Henry: "though we may suppose it either stony or dirty." The church's goodbye was a prayer meeting. HENRY
- **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." SPURGEON
- **"The will of the Lord be done."** The friends' last word echoes Gethsemane (Luke 22:42). Sproul: God's hidden will is His business; His revealed will is ours to obey. Henry: "it becomes us to say, The will of the Lord be done." THE TEXT
- **An old disciple.** Mnason of Cyprus, "a disciple of long standing" (v16), opened his home to a Gentile-heavy team. Henry: "It is an honourable thing to be an old disciple of Jesus Christ." HENRY
- **Apostasy from Moses?** The rumor used *apostasia* (v21), the word of 2 Thess 2:3. It was false: Paul circumcised Timothy and kept vows; he refused only to make the Law a ladder to God. THE GREEK

- **Doing right does not guarantee safety.** Henry: “Paul might do well, and yet suffer for it.” The vow meant to quiet the rumor put Paul in the temple where the Asian Jews found him. HENRY
- **The cry of the Passion.** *Aire* — “Away with him!” — appears only three times: against Jesus (Luke 23:18) and twice against Paul (21:36; 22:22). The servant walks the road of his Master. THE GREEK
- **God used Rome to rescue His man.** “When they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul” (Guzik). The chains of verse 33 kept him alive for Caesarea and Rome (23:11). THE TEXT

† Questions for the Table

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?**

A human interpretation of the Holy Spirit’s prophecy (Guzik).

21:4; 20:22–23

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?**

What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart?

21:12–14

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?**

Ready to suffer is more than ready to serve (Spurgeon).

21:13; 2 Tim 4:6

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?**

Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks.

21:20–26; 1 Cor 10:32–33

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?**

Paul might do well, and yet suffer for it (Henry).

21:26–33

6 **Bloody, chained and slandered, Paul asked to speak to the crowd that had just beaten him. Who is the “crowd” in my life I would rather walk away from than talk to?**

Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people.

21:37–40; 22:1

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

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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