

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 64

### I. Exposition of Chapter Twenty One.

#### A. Verses 1-14 – The Journey to Jerusalem.

##### 1. Verses 1-4 – The journey and stay at the city of Tyre.

- a. Verse 4 – **“And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.”** – In 20:22-23, we saw that Paul stated that he was being compelled by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem in spite of the warnings of what would happen to him there. In this verse, it seems like it’s is saying that the disciples in Tyre were being used of the Holy Spirit to tell Paul to NOT go to Jerusalem. Dr. Stanley Horton explains:

**“We read that the believers ‘urged’ (kept repeatedly telling) Paul ‘through the Spirit’ to give up his trip to Jerusalem. This does not mean, however, that the Spirit did not want Paul to go to Jerusalem. The word ‘through’ (Gk. *dia*) is not the word used in previous passages for the direct agency of the Spirit. (See Acts 13:4, where the Gk. is *hupo*, a word used for direct, or primary, agency.) Here the Greek is better translated ‘in consequence of the Spirit,’ that is, because of what the Spirit said. The Spirit himself definitely did not forbid Paul to go on. The Spirit was compelling Paul to go (Acts 20:22). Paul knew the Holy Spirit does not contradict himself. It was not the Spirit but the believers’ love and concern for Paul that made them keep saying he should not go.”<sup>1</sup>**

##### 2. Verses 5-14 – Paul continues his journey ending up in Caesarea.

- a. Verse 5 – **“When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed.”** – Just like Paul had done with the Ephesian elders before departing from them, Paul knelt and prayed with them before he left. This shows the continual dependence upon the Lord in every venture, and his care for his fellow believers.
- b. Verse 7 – **“And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day.”** – It seems that Paul recognized the need for believers to have fellowship with one another. He had just spent seven days with the believers in Tyre and now coming to Ptolemais, he stayed and, no doubt, encouraged and ministered to the believers there as well.
- c. Verse 8 – **“On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.”**

- 1) Philip was **“...one of the seven...”**, which is referring to the seven men who were chosen to be appointed as deacons (Gr. diakoneo) and assist in serving the believing widows in the church at Jerusalem (6:1-7). The requirements for these men were they had to be of **“...good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom...”** (Acts 6:3. This is about 22 years after the event of chapter 6. Also see Acts 8:40 where we see Philip going to Caesarea). Dr. Craig Keener offers an interesting thought:

**“Ironically, Paul as persecutor helped kill Philip’s colleague Stephen and force Philip on the evangelistic tour that led him to Caesarea. As fellow believers, Philip and Paul now act as brothers...”<sup>2</sup> (See Acts 7:58).**

- 2) **“...the house of Philip the evangelist...”** - The word **“evangelist”** means; **“a bringer of glad tidings”; “a proclaimer of good news.”**
- 3) There is one basic message to the ministry of evangelist – he preaches Christ! – **Acts 8:5, 26-39.**
- 4) It’s important to note that this ministry also includes signs and wonders – **Acts 8:6-7.**
- 5) The fact that Philip began as a deacon (servant) of tables indicates that he had a servant’s heart and proven character. Those best equipped to have authority are those who have learned to submit to authority.
- 6) An evangelist has three basic areas of ministry:
- a) Ministry to the Body of Christ in equipping them and building them up – **Ephesians 4:11.**
  - b) Public Ministry to the Lost – **Acts 8:4-12.**
  - c) Private Ministry to the Lost – **Acts 8:26-40.**

- d. Verse 9 – **“Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.”** – Regarding the mention that they were **“virgins”**, The word could have been translated **“unmarried”**, and

<sup>1</sup>Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 346.

<sup>2</sup>Craig S. Keener, *Acts: New Cambridge Bible Commentary*, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2020), 512.

according to Keener, it's indicative that they were probably young adolescents.<sup>3</sup> The word **“prophesied”** means: **“to speak under the influence of divine inspiration, with or without reference to future events”**<sup>4</sup> Sometimes referred to as the **“simple gift of prophecy”** in order to differentiate it from the ministry of the Prophet. (cf. **I Corinthians 14:1-5, 39**). Dr. Stanley Horton states:

**“The mention of these daughters seems to be significant. It shows that Philip’s family served the Lord and that he encouraged them to seek and exercise gifts of the Spirit. It seems also that their ministry in this gift of prophecy must have brought encouragement and blessing to Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 14:3). At Miletus he had been anxious to hurry on his way (Acts 20:16). But here the blessing of the Lord was so rich that he stayed a considerable number of days, this despite having already spent a week at Tyre, with the Day of Pentecost approaching.”**<sup>5</sup>

1) Ernest Gentile adds insights to these four daughters of Philip:

**“Eusebius relates on the testimony of Papias, how Philips daughters were known in later days as informants on the early history of the Church....Although none of their prophecies is recorded, it is evident that the four daughters were highly esteemed by the Christian community. They are the only women in the Church specifically identified as participating in prophecy.”**<sup>6</sup>

e. **Verse 10 – “And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.”**

1) Agabus was a well known prophet in the early church. He is mentioned in **Acts 11:27-28** where he prophesied the coming famine which would affect the known world of that day.

2) There is a difference between the simple gift of prophecy and the ministry of the Prophet. Basically, the gift of prophecy is something any believe can operate in as the Holy Spirit wills but the Ministry of the Prophet is a calling for only those God appoints (cf. **I Corinthians 14:1-4; I Corinthians 12:28-31**).

3) It seems that in the simple gift of prophecy there is usually not any guidance or revelation given but it is for **“edification, exhortation and comfort.”** (**I Corinthians 14:3**).

4) There seems to be three levels of prophecy revealed in Scripture:

a) The Ministry of the Prophet.

b) The Gift of Prophecy.

c) The “Prophecy of Scripture” – **II Peter 1:19-21**. The King James Version reads for **verse 19**; **“we have also a more sure word of prophecy.”** The other two levels of prophecy are to always be judged and discerned as accurate or inaccurate by the Scriptures.

5) Beware of False Prophets – **Matthew 7:15-23**. (cf. **Deuteronomy 18:20-22; 13:1-5**.)

f. **Verse 11 – “When he had come to us, he took Paul’s belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.’”** Regarding this kind of acting out while prophesying, Ernest Gentile writes:

**“In the tradition of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, (Added: see Jeremiah 19:1–15; Ezekiel 4:1–17) Agabus acted out his prophecy by using Paul’s belt to bind his own hands. This is sometimes referred to as ‘prophetic symbolism’ but is more accurately described as ‘enacted prophecy.’...The enactment is as much a part of the prophecy as the words, and usually the graphic demonstration forms a picture in people’s minds that is remembered more easily than mere words would be.”**<sup>7</sup>

g. **Verses 12-14** – The believers plead with Paul not to go, but to no avail. Again, if he was not to go, certainly the Lord would have said it plainly through the prophet Agabus.

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<sup>3</sup>Keener, 513.

<sup>4</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 439.

<sup>5</sup>Horton, 347.

<sup>6</sup>Ernest B. Gentile, *Your Sons and Daughters shall Prophecy: Prophetic Gifts in Ministry Today*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1999), 205.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 206.