

Acts: The Church on Earth

A Straight Course, 2

Acts 21:1-14

Enough can't be said about taking the most efficient route

Gas mileage, traffic, time to get there

Moving here

Even in the grocery store

Trying to get a lot done, have a specific efficient order, distracted by something or someone, totally forget

Previously:

- Acts is about the Work of the Holy Spirit through his people...the Church
- Jesus ascends
- Try to pick a replacement for Judas, but the Jesus had another person in mind, someone more than not a qualified church leader and believer, an unbeliever, a Christian-murderer - Saul
- **Pentecost changes everything**

Unless the LORD builds the house,

They labor in vain who build it;

Unless the LORD guards the city,

The watchman stays awake in vain.

Psalm 127:1

- Deacons, Stephen the first martyr
- Philip, Ethiopian Eunuch
- Peter and disciples, gospel, healings all in Jerusalem
- Persecuted, beaten, jailed by the religious leaders for preaching the name of Jesus
- Peter's vision, God wanting to reach the Gentiles (unheard of! Unthinkable! Absurd! Tevia)
- Saul knocked off his horse
- Ananias sent, prays, scales come off
- Saul -> Paul. Wilderness. Returns to meet with church elders.
- Paul and Barnabus separated to the gospel. Missionary journeys.
- Acts 13+14, trip 1, sorcerer, false prophet, many jewish believers, plot against them
- Acts 16 - trip 2, a man from Macedonia (whom they never actually meet), Damascus, Slave Girl, Corinth, Ephesus, Writes 1+2 Thessalonians
- Acts 18-21 Third Trip - 4 years, 53-57AD - Massive sorcery book burning in Ephesus, revival and riot

Through all of this, we've seen that God continues to use ordinary men and women for extraordinary things.

All of these people were literally changed by God. The courses of their lives forever altered. Never to go back to the way they were before.

Acts 21:1-4

Them - Ephesian elders. Really close friends.

"Tore away"

Friends and seasons. Those who go with you even if they haven't physically gone. Others are left behind.



Cos, Rhodes - Islands. Patara - port city End of the line for that boat

Found a ship to go all the way to Phoenicia modern day Lebanon area
People still ride cargo ships today for much cheaper

Sighted Cyprus - think of sailing on the open Mediterranean. No modern equipment. Not even a sextant. I'm sure used the stars. But they see land and it's Cyprus, so they adjust their course. How much more important it would be in their day and age to get the right course! The right timing! Knowledge of weather, politics, survival, etc.

A military guy about survival - Basic skills and knowledge kids had in the 1800's that we don't have at all today

Not a short journey. Days if not weeks or more.

The importance of staying the course in the Christian life.

Heaven is not easy to get to. We are guaranteed entry, but we have to survive the journey and get there in one piece.

[Mat 7:13-14 NKJV] 13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide [is] the gate and broad [is] the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 "Because narrow [is] the gate and difficult [is] the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

[Eph 5:15-17 NKJV] 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord [is].

Spiritual Grenades

Time when things were very uncertain at church, a lot of upheaval, turmoil, trouble, hurt. Walking carefully. Not rushing to conclusions, decisions, etc.

Going in a circle in life, sidetracked...but God brought me right back around to the point I left off at.

Repeating English class in HS

Oh to not have to learn those lessons again and just get it right the first time.

Sometimes a detour doesn't have a lot of spiritual consequence. Sometimes it's "only" wasted time, a little longer to get there, and if you run right, you might just catch up and pass (so-to-speak) your companions who didn't detour and were on the same path.

Playing Phase 10, Joanne catches up after being behind

Other times...the detour can have dire consequences. Loss of life, limb...spiritual maiming. Discipline or worse. Disqualification.

Disobedience > Disciple > Disqualification

Not just for yourself, but others.

All those in your life.

Biggest thing I think about as a father...how my choices affect my children. Spiritually. Disciplining them. Not. Where to live. What to do. Life's ministry. Example. How much I love them. All will play in. They will have their own choice, but what I do will affect them more than anything else in life as children.

Once they are grown, my actions will still have consequences in their lives, but it won't have as much significance, perhaps, in pulling them one way or the other. But, that all depends on what it is and where they are with the Lord.

But the spiritual road does not always follow the practical road.

The best-course-of-action physically.

[Read Philippians 3]

[Phi 3:8-9 NKJV] 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which [is] from the law, but that which [is] through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;]

In fact, our spiritual progress, our calling from God, may not make any sense to anyone else. Even ourselves. But we still must go when he calls.

The believers who Paul stayed with here, knew, a word of knowledge, that trouble awaited him in Jerusalem.

But they told him not to go. They saw the trouble as reason not to go.

This can be wise. This can be practical. It can even be God's will. But we can't let physical circumstances be our landmarks for going or not going.

Moving here, work, etc.

Paul's trips - naked, shipwrecked, hungry, beaten

I don't think the Spirit was telling Paul not to go. I think the Spirit was making it clear to Paul there would be trouble. That his life wasn't going to get any easier.

:5-14

Companions earlier in the trip, perhaps still: Sopatrem Aristarchus, Secundus, Galius, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus

Even after this short time together, they were closely knit.

Christian friends even today, closely knit, even from short meetings.

A real connection.

Sometimes longer, like shared ministry, goals, experience in the Lord.

Whole families went to say goodbye to Paul. A real love with believers.

[Jhn 13:35 NKJV] 35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

[Phi 2:20-22 NKJV] 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know his [Timothy] proven character, that as a son with [his] father he served with me in the gospel.

Philip the Evangelist, four daughters who prophesied

Oh to have my kids prophesy! If I had four daughters, really would want them to all be spiritual or else I might not survive

Another prophet, Agabus

Prophet - speaking forth God's truth. His word. Speaking for him, in a sense. Press secretary. Sometimes future. Sometimes just specific rhema for a person, the church. Can be a defining gift or occasional gift like the daughters here.

Everyone had a legitimate word from the Lord.

These people literally defined and remembered by their spiritual gifts. (same for all the disciples, Paul, Barnabus)

What are your spiritual gifts? 1 Cor 12-14

Do they define you, your very life? As you follow God, you'll see that you can really do nothing but them and live out in them.

[Luk 4:24 KJV] 24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

We're afraid of the gifts today! I get it. There's a lot of (unnecessary) confusion around them. But they're natural. They're healthy. They're what you're designed to be, as a vessel, spiritually! It's the shape of your spiritual container.

Gifts vs. talents - being a good steward

How important is it we live by the Spirit, and live our giftings out! Whether one or many, they're all equally important in the kingdom.

[Jhn 3:8 KJV] 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

The world, your flesh, even your family and friends who love you (and may or may not love the Lord or be submitted to His Spirit) will not understand. Those who do love God will understand spiritually even if physically it doesn't make much sense.

Like Pentecost, let God fill you. Speak through you. Use you. Send you.

Again, the prophecy, this time more specific and visual - being bound in Jerusalem.

But again, they interpreted it as a message NOT to go.

But Paul was so sold out for the gospel, so sold out for Jesus and telling his fellow Jews about the light he had seen...nothing would stop him.

It even breaks Paul's heart- as if it would be easy for him to leave them.

Going to MD, leaving NY. Coming back to NY. Coming to MT. Of course our hearts break.

What will stop you?

[Mar 10:29-30 NKJV] 29 So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, 30 "who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this

time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.

“The will of the Lord be done” - a proper way to end a spiritual disagreement
But moreso, should be our consent in life.

[Mat 6:10 KJV] 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven.

Do we really want that? I think we know it's going to take tremendous sacrifice. Don't let physical circumstances prevent you from blowing away the chaff and the work of the enemy, by the Spirit, for the Spirit, and in the Spirit.