

**1187 Paul's obedience to God, his arrest, and beginning of his defense - Acts(21)1-(22)16
(by Whirlwind)**

First, let us examine this journey and Paul's obedience to God. Second, we will discuss how Paul stood on God's side without regard for his own life, citing previous writings. Third, we will explore the reason Paul underwent the purification rite with four men in Jerusalem, citing previous writings. Fourth, we will address the circumstances leading to Paul's arrest in the temple. Fifth, we will discuss how the commander permitted Paul to present his case against the Jews. Sixth, drawing on previous writings, we will recount how Paul saw the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. Finally, we will discuss how, while in Damascus, Paul recounted the message God sent through Ananias to him, also drawing on previous writings.

Please note that this article is an expansion of the topicwise Bible study held on Sunday (4/26/26). Unless otherwise specified, verses refer to those in NASB95. If this article refers previous articles, they can all be found on our website, '<https://a-christian-voice.com/>'; click on 'Understanding Spiritual Life'.

1. This journey and Paul's obedience to God

"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; and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. 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. After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit (G4151, spirit) not to set foot in Jerusalem. 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. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again."(Acts 21:1-6)

This passage is written very clearly, so I will not elaborate further. The only point that needs explanation is this verse: "...they kept telling Paul through the Spirit (G4151, spirit) not to set foot in Jerusalem."(Acts 21:4) In Greek, the word G4151 can refer to either the Holy Spirit or the human spirit; context is needed to distinguish between the two. Here, for the two reasons outlined below, we must conclude that it refers to the human spirit: first, by examining other scriptural passages, and second, by considering that "what God tells us through the Bible is consistent."

Regarding the scriptures, "...a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy (G40) Spirit (G4151) 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.'"(Acts 21:10-11) In the Book of Acts, when referring to the Holy Spirit, it is explicitly stated as in the above verses.

From the perspective that "what God tells us through the Bible is consistent," this Agabus was a true prophet, as he had previously proven himself in Acts 11:27-28. As we

discussed earlier in "1179 Gospel to Gentiles, angel rescues Peter, and Herod's death – Acts(11)1–(12)19" under "3. Barnabas seeks Saul, and the man Agabus," we noted that Agabus merely told Paul what the Holy Spirit had revealed would happen; he did not say that the Holy Spirit did not want Paul to go to Jerusalem. As a result, Paul went, but this does not mean Paul was disobedient to God; Paul was obedient to God, just as he said, "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance."(Acts 26:19-20) If the Holy Spirit were capitalized here, it would imply that Paul disobeyed God by going to Jerusalem. However, considering that "what God tells us through the Bible is consistent," this would be inconsistent. Therefore, it must refer to the human spirit with a lowercase "s."

2. Paul stood on God's side without regard for his own life

"When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day. 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. Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses (G4395, prophesy). As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 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.'" When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. 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." And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!" After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem. 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)

Philip was one of the seven deacons, as the Scripture says: "The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch."(Acts 6:5) In the matter of Philip and the eunuch, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away (cf. Acts 8:26–39). Later, "...Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea."(Acts 8:40) We see that he eventually settled in Caesarea. Consistent with what was mentioned earlier, his four daughters who prophesied did not tell Paul not to go to Jerusalem. This word "prophesy" (G4395) is explicitly defined in the following passage as including the knowledge of future events: "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied (G4395) of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries."(1 Peter 1:10) Furthermore, we see that they ultimately said, "...The will of the Lord be done!"(Acts 21:14) We will see later that this was indeed the Lord's will. Paul did indeed follow His plan: "...After I have been there [Jerusalem], I must also see Rome."(Acts 19:21) But he did not go in peace and tranquility; rather, he went in chains.

Regarding the passage about Agabus, we have already discussed it in "3" of "1179" mentioned earlier. The conclusion there was that we saw how Paul truly did not regard his life as of any importance, standing on God's side to make his decision. Please refer to that article.

3. Paul observes the rite of purification in Jerusalem with four men

"After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 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; 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. What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; 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. 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." 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)

On the second day after his arrival in Jerusalem, Paul met with James and the elders and told them about his work as an apostle to the Gentiles. From their advice, it was clear that they did not want to offend the Jews and wanted the Jews to know that Paul was observing the Law, but they did not truly understand that he was observing the true spirit of the Law, not merely its letter. Take circumcision as an example. The Old Testament stipulates: "And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant."(Genesis 17:12-13) Paul's view is this: "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit (G4151, spirit), not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."(Romans 2:28-29)

So he knew very clearly that their suggestion was wrong, but he deeply understood, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."(Romans 12:18) When something was at odds with the truth of the gospel, he had to speak out, as the Scripture says, "But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"(Galatians 2:14)

But observing the rites of purity is a matter of choice, just as "...food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat."(1 Corinthians 8:8) "Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble."(1 Corinthians 8:13) If not observing the rites of purification causes someone to stumble, what harm is there in choosing to observe them?

As for the Gentiles who have come to believe, they still require Gentiles to follow their own understanding, namely, "...they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication."(Acts 21:25) Previously, in "1182 James's view, decision not by Holy Spirit, and Silas and Mark – Acts(15)13-41," under "2. The Wrong Decision of the Apostles, Elders, and the Whole Church," we discussed in detail why this was not a decision of the Holy Spirit; please refer to that article for clarification.

4. The reason the crowd seized Paul in the temple

"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, 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." For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. 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. While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion."(Acts 21:27-31)

The Jews from Asia were already hostile toward Paul, and when they mistakenly believed he had brought a Gentile into the temple, defiling the holy place, they successfully stirred up the crowd to seize him, causing the whole city to be in an uproar. They seized Paul in the temple, and the temple gates were immediately shut, for they intended to kill him with no means of escape. But their plan to kill Paul failed, for "...a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion."(Acts 21:31)

5. The commander allows Paul to address the Jews

"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. 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. 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. When he got to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; for the multitude of the people kept following them, shouting, "Away with him!" 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? 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?" 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."(Acts 21:32-39)

The crowd seized Paul in the temple, and the gates were immediately shut. They began beating him outside the temple before they could kill him. Before they could kill him, the commander arrived, but upon his arrival, he had Paul bound without asking why. Since the crowd was agitated and everyone was shouting different things, and the crowd was pressing in fiercely, the soldiers as a result lifted Paul up to carry him into the barracks. As they were about to enter the barracks, he asked the commander in Greek to address the crowd. Although the commander misunderstood his background, Paul explained his origins, and the commander granted his request.

6. Paul recounts his encounter with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus

"Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you."

And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished. "But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.' And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.' But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus."(Acts 22:1-11)

We see that Paul (Saul) spoke to the assembled Jews in Hebrew, first introducing himself and stating a fact: "...I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions."(Galatians 1:14) That is why he persecuted Christians. Then he spoke of what happened on the road to Damascus, saying, "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision."(Acts 26:19) Previously, in "1177 Saul saw great light, Ananias, and Peter raised Tabitha – Acts(9)1-43, " under "1. The three accounts of Christ appearing to Saul," we examined the three accounts of the Lord Christ's appearance in the bright light. Since these are based on a single factual event, we combined them to align with all the narratives and reconstruct the scene as it occurred. Please refer to that article.

We see the Scripture says, "And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'"(Acts 22:10). He knew that the One he had encountered was the Lord, and the tasks the Lord had appointed for him were later revealed to him through Ananias. We can also be certain that Paul did indeed see the risen Lord Jesus Christ on this occasion, for as he himself says in another passage: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ...and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also."(1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

7. Paul recounts the message God sent through Ananias to him while he was in Damascus

"A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him. And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'"(Acts 22:12-16)

Previously, in "1177," under "2. The Lord instructs Ananias to baptize Saul and fill him with the Holy Spirit," we discussed how the Lord, in a vision, instructed Ananias to baptize Saul and fill him with the Holy Spirit. In this, we saw the Lord's sense of humor, as well as the message He conveyed to Paul in prayer—a message that was essentially the same as the partial message Paul had heard in the blinding light. In this passage, we see that Paul was persecuting the disciples at the time, yet Ananias called him "brother." Do you think Paul could have remained unmoved? Paul was indeed praying at that moment, for he looked up, just as God said in "2" of "1177." He was indeed to bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ before all people, for though he was an apostle to the Gentiles, he always went to the synagogue first whenever possible when preaching. He certainly did not delay, but was baptized with water and the Spirit, thereby washing away his sins.