

HUMAN ADVICE AND THE WILL OF GOD!
ACTS CH21:1-6



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HEARTFELT GOOD-BYES! V1-3

Why does Paul want to go to Jerusalem?

Remember back in Acts Ch20:2-3, when Paul was visiting Corinth and he wrote to the Church in Rome (Book of Romans) "At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem." Romans Ch15:25-26

Who were the team going with him and why?

- Berea - Sopater the son of Pyrrhus
- Thessalonica - Aristarchus + Secundus
- Derbe - Gaius (probably the same person Ch19:29)
- Lystra (Asia) - Timothy
- Asia - Tychicus
- Ephesus (Asia) - Trophimus (Acts Ch21:29 + 2 Tim Ch4:20)

Philippi (Macedonia) - Luke Ch16:10-16 + Ch20:5-Ch21:18

1st Corinthians Ch16:3-4 tells us that Paul intended that local representatives from the planted Churches he had founded should convey the money collected for the poor Christians in Jerusalem!

Paul has just said "Good-bye" to the Ephesian Elders who are crying their eyes out because they have been told that they will never see Paul again this side of eternity (Ch20:25 + Ch20:38),

compelled by the Holy Spirit, he knows that only imprisonments and hardships await! The “Good-bye” is heartfelt, v1! It literally means “being torn apart”, so deep was the love among the saints! All of this before Paul and the team set off by ship, covering around 600 miles before arriving in Tyre!

So Paul, being quite clear of the prophecy from the Holy Spirit, continues to head to Jerusalem!

HEARTFELT GUIDANCE! V4-5

So has Paul got it wrong and the Christians in Tyre (Ch11:19) got it right? I'm confused!

In the Old Testament, prophets existed for two primary reasons, **firstly**, they heard from God and **secondly** they were to communicate what they had heard from God to the masses. So the Old Testament prophets spoke with the highest authority, because they spoke God's Word to the people. The qualifications of a true prophet was that their “Word” was consistent with Scripture and that they were accurate!

The Old Testament prophets wrote their words as God's Words in Scripture for all time – Numbers Ch22:38; Deuteronomy Ch18:18-20; Jeremiah Ch1:9; Ezekiel Ch2:7. Therefore, to believe or disbelieve a prophets word, was in actual fact to believe or disbelieve God Himself!

False prophets can be identified because of what they say as it is not in line with Scripture and they are not accurate. For example, the founder of the Mormons, Joseph Smith who claimed to be a prophet, is a false prophet, because what he proclaims is not in line with Scripture. The same with the prophet Mohammed, claiming to be a prophet from God, yet, what he prophecies is not in line with Scripture.

This is why in Ephesians Ch2:20 it says “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone”. All Scripture is about Jesus! The apostles and prophets, being used by God, wrote God's revelation to us, The Bible. We have the 66 Books of the Bible, as they clearly reveal God's plan, purpose and will for our lives. ***There is therefore no more need for the type of Old Testament prophets!***

However, ***there is the gift of prophecy*** where Paul says “Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy” (1st Cor Ch14:1), but all prophecies need to be tested out by Scripture (1 Thessalonians Ch5:20-21). The New Testament talks about the gift of prophecy being expressed in three different ways:

- Firstly, ***through preaching God's Word***. 1st Corinthians Ch14:3, we can be strengthened, encouraged and comforted. We need to value preaching!
- Secondly, ***foretelling the future for the Church***. In Acts Ch11:27-29 where Agabus brings God's revelation of a future famine. The Church is warned!
- Thirdly, ***foretelling the future for an individual***. In Acts Ch20:22-23, Ch21:4 + Ch21:10-11 where Agabus again is used, telling Paul about what is awaiting him in Jerusalem, the hardships and sufferings that he will endure!

Therefore, prophecy in this way is Biblical. Prophecy today will be a message from God, needs to be tested out, can be misinterpreted, and should never be placed as highly as God's Word!

How incredible it is with Paul hardly knowing these believers (wives and children included v5) accompany the team to the ship and pray on the beach together! Ties between Christians, especially in a hostile environment, can be very strong, even when there has been no time for a relationship to develop in the normal way.

HEARTFELT GOD'S WAY! V6

Paul has interpreted the guidance and prophecy from the Holy Spirit correctly! He is able to

correctly assess the advice, albeit incorrect advice, from other Christians, heartfelt as it is, and in doing so follows the will of God!

It is important for those exercising the gift of prophecy to do so in a godly way, and for such prophecies to be tested out. As mistakes in the original prophecy or in the interpretation of the prophecy can be made!

Paul is heading to Jerusalem where he will be arrested v33, imprisoned v33, subject to various trials Ch21:37 – Ch26:32 and finally sent off to Rome to appear before the Emperor Ch27:1- Ch28:16! ***All of Paul's missional journeys fulfils the prophecy made by Jesus In Ch9:16!***

APPLICATION

As a Church do we believe in the New Testament gift of prophecy and that it can be used to help the Church and individuals, to be strengthened, encouraged and comforted? Yes, because we see it in Scripture and Scripture is our ultimate Authority!

We should encourage and regulate “prophecy” within our Church, how?

1. Pray seriously for the Lord's wisdom on how and when to approach this subject in Church.
2. Teach regularly on this subject.
3. The Church should be patient and proceed slowly.
4. The Church should recognise and encourage the gift of prophecy.