

“FOLLOWING IN JESUS’ STEPS”

Acts 21:15-26

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

INTRODUCTION

It can be exciting to think of following in Jesus’ steps when that involves traveling about teaching, preaching, winning many disciples, helping many people, seeing lives transformed by the power of God, healing the sick, raising the dead, performing other miracles, receiving the love and acclaim of the multitudes! Who wouldn’t love that and could not enjoy that?

But we must remember how Jesus’ life ended! And we must remember how many of those excited followers were still with Him at the end.

When we look at Paul we may like to think about the amazing success of his worldwide preaching campaign, of the many souls saved, of the many churches started. That is exciting stuff! **Would you enjoy being able to have a life and ministry like the apostle Paul?**

But, was it always like that? NO! This week I was “reading” from II Corinthians Paul’s analysis of his life of service for Christ (II Cor. 11:23-28):

- Labor and hardship
- Imprisonments
- Beaten times without number
- Often in danger of death
- Five times receiving 39 lashes from the Jews
- Three times beaten with rods
- Stoned once
- Three times shipwrecked
- A day and a night spent floating in the sea
- Frequent difficult journeys
- Dangers from fivers, robbers, from his countrymen, from the Gentiles
- Dangers in the city, in the wilderness, on the sea
- Dangers among false brethren
- Through many sleepless nights
- In hunger and thirst, often without food
- In cold and exposure without adequate clothing
- The daily pressure of concern for all the churches
- In addition to all of this the Lord gave him “a thorn in the flesh that He refused to remove.

All of this can be OVERWHELMING and quite discouraging!

But, Paul learned a very important lesson:

God’s strength is made perfect in his weakness; and God’s grace is sufficient for him (II Cor. 12:9).

Therefore, he was willing to be like Christ—even at the end of his days. In the coming section of Acts we see several parallels between Jesus and Paul:

- 1) Paul is violently taken and arrested—like Jesus
- 2) He is delivered by the Jews to the Gentiles—like Jesus.
- 3) Paul is smitten on the mouth before the Sanhedrin—like Jesus.
- 4) People cry out against him: “Away with him!”—like Jesus.
- 5) Paul is accused before the Roman governor and then stands before a Herod—like Jesus.
- 6) The same accusers accuse him; the same accusation is brought against him—treason against Caesar—Like Jesus.
- 7) Three times he is pronounce innocent of something worthy of death; yet not freed—like Jesus.
- 8) A renewed friendship takes place between a Herod and a Roman procurator—like with Jesus.
- 9) Freedom comes to him at the end—like Jesus’ resurrection!

YOU MUST BE WILLING TO FOLLOW IN JESUS’ STEPS—EVEN IF IT MEANS SUFFERING AND TROUBLE.

Now, let us trace Paul’s steps as he walks into the mouth of the lion—he comes into Jerusalem to bring his offering for the poor saints of Jerusalem and to worship the Lord at the Feast of Pentecost.

- I. CARE FOR PAUL’S LODGING AND PROVISIONS (vv. 15-16)
 - It was a long (64 miles) and difficult (uphill) journey at least 2 days in length.
 - Mnason was likely a Hellenistic Jew and probably in Jerusalem at Pentecost—maybe one of the 120!
- II. WARM RECEPTION FROM THE CHRISTIANS IN JERUSALEM (17-20a)
 - A. The believers in general (17)
 - B. The elders and pastor—James (18) [Note “us” —last time until the voyage in 27:1]
 - C. Glorifying God over the amazing results of Paul’s “ministry”—service; Paul gave them a “point by point” description of his 2nd and third missionary journeys.
- III. ADDRESSING A PROBLEM AMONG THE JEWS
 - A. Zeal for the Mosaic Law (20)
 - B. Misinformation about Paul (21)
 1. Teaching Jews among the Gentiles apostasy from Moses
 2. Teaching to avoid circumcision and keeping of customs
 - C. Correction of this misinformation (22-26)
 1. Keep a rite of purification with men local men—conclusion of a Nazirite Vow (Num. 6; vv. 22-24)
 - Generously pay their expenses.
 - Participate along with them—purifying yourself also.
 - Conclude the ceremony with the shaving of heads and offering of the sacrifice.
 - Thereby prove that you “walk orderly, keeping the Law.”
 2. We have already settled the issue of Gentiles and their requirements (chapter 15; v. 25)
 3. Paul agreed and began the process (26)

CONCLUSION

So far so good—but trouble was about to burst forth and break the calm.

YOU MUST BE WILLING TO FOLLOW IN JESUS’ STEPS—EVEN IF IT MEANS SUFFERING AND TROUBLE.