

40a ACTS

This is Friday, the 30th of July, 2004. We are continuing our study tonight in the book of Acts. We are looking at Paul and his third missionary journey.

I woke up in the middle of the night wondering if I had said second missionary journey last time. I think I might have if I did. It belatedly came to me like five days late.

But this is the third missionary journey and we are at the threshold of chapter 21. Let's take a moment before we begin to examine our own souls before the Lord and make sure that God the Holy Spirit will be able to teach us from God's word this evening. Shall we pray? Father, thank you for the opportunity we have to spend time together in fellowship and in the study of your word.

We thank you for the blessing that we receive from the presence of each one that's here. We thank you for the encouragement and the knowledge that the bonds of fellowship and of friendship that we share now will last eternally. We thank you that we are privileged to move together forward in our understanding of your word and application in our daily circumstances.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will give us a clear understanding of this portion of your word and will show us how it applies to the decisions and actions that face us in the days ahead. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tonight I have given you a handout which I have freely plagiarized the map from some other source and only slightly modified the verbiage down below. You can find a very similar set of maps for the first, second, and third missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul on biblestudy.org or something like that. I just wanted something a little bit larger than what we have in our Bibles to note one particular aspect.

Last time, and one particular aspect of the third missionary journey as Paul is now returning to Jerusalem, if you look at the first missionary journey, you remember way back in the earlier chapters of Acts, Acts chapter 13 and 14, Antioch, separate to me Saul and Barnabas for the work I have for them. Have we ever had a situation like this? As a believer, we sort of get thrust into a new circumstance. Maybe we move to a new town, get a new job.

We're on a fresh course. We don't typically get called to be missionaries or go into what people like to call full-time Christian service in the sense of getting paid to do the Lord's work. But we do have big paradigm shifts and big changes in our life.

Something moves, something changes, and we find ourselves in a new set of circumstances. This is what happens with Saul and Barnabas in Acts 13 and 14. So you look at the map of that first journey, and they don't go very far, do they? They just kind

of circle around.

It's the first time anybody has ever gone to the Gentiles. And so they go over there, and you remember they landed on the southern shore and then went inland and eventually ended up in Iconium and Lystra and Derbe. And then they retrace their steps pretty much and go back the way they came and come back through Cyprus over to Antioch.

And that was the maiden voyage, sort of a small trip. The second missionary journey that we saw in chapter 15 through 18 was a much bigger deal. We saw Paul and company heading northwest and going beyond.

They started on familiar territory, went through Tarsus, went through Lystra and Derbe and Iconium and that, and then headed further northwest. And Paul thought about going one place. God says, no.

Paul thought about going a different place. God says, no. Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit prevented them.

They keep going northwest. They end up at Troas. They go across the sea there to Neopolis.

They go to Philippi, and there's the Philippian jailer, Acts 16. And you can see that the reason God prevented Paul from going to the right or going to the left is that you have Lydia and you have the jailer and you have these other people who need to be hearing the word of God from the lips of Paul. And so God just prevents him from doing anything different.

And Paul is sort of, as an apostle you might say, he's in his adolescent phase. He's in his middle time of learning. He's got some experience.

He's already got one journey under his belt, but he's still venturing forth into new territory. He hooks on around through Thessalonica, Berea, down to Athens and Corinth, dips over to Ephesus, and then back to Caesarea and to Jerusalem to give his report there in Acts 18. Now we're looking at the third missionary journey, which begins in Acts 18 and takes us through chapter 21.

And we are at the closing portion of that. Once again, Paul begins at Antioch. He goes through Tarsus.

This time he doesn't hook around anywhere north of Antioch. He goes to Derbe and Lystra and Iconium and Antioch. But then he goes more or less straight west to Ephesus.

He stays there at Ephesus. And we've seen all of this down to where we are now in chapter 21. He's already gone up, around, and back to Athens through all of the places he had been before, Berea, Thessalonica, Philippi, and so on.

He goes up and down that coast. You can see the area of the seven churches where the letters in Revelation 2 and 3 will be written is on that western coast that includes Ephesus. And then there's a little ring inland from Ephesus of those churches.

Well, if you follow that around, he is all the way back down. He has come to Samos and Miletus. And at Miletus, he stops and he says, all you guys in Ephesus, I don't have time to come by and visit you again.

Spent all of that time with you earlier. Not coming back. You come down and see me.

Now you look on the map there. Third missionary journey. Look at the distance between Ephesus and Miletus.

It's not that great, is it? But Paul says, I don't have time to come see you. You come see me. And he gives that great speech that we just saw in Acts chapter 20.

Now, if you're still with me on this, here's my question. Paul is going to spend time on the remaining leg of this journey. And we're going to see in chapter 21, he's going to end up spending a week in one place and several days in another.

And it seems that he's in no particular hurry to get to Jerusalem, as long as he arrives by Pentecost. And yet he tells the Ephesians, I am all in a sweat, and I can't cover this little bitty distance here to come up and see you. You come down and see me.

So I want to point out what he says to them. Verse 17, chapter 20. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus, called for the elders of the church.

When they had come, he said, you know, from the first day I came to Asia. And he tells them about his manner of life. Many tears and trials.

Plotting of the Jews. I kept back nothing that was helpful. I testified to Jews, Greeks, everybody.

Repentance toward God. Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 22.

See, now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. None of these things move me. I do not count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Now this ministry that he received from the Lord Jesus, where did we first see this? This was back on the Damascus Road. This was during his days of blindness. Remember that? Galatians 1.1. Paul, an apostle, not sent from men, not through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.

That's your footnote there on Christ giving him this mission. But God tells him, you are going to the Gentiles. This is your job.

Now you look at those maps again. What did he do in his first journey? He's going to hit the synagogues, he's going to preach in the synagogues, but he keeps getting kicked out and talking to the Gentiles. Second missionary journey to an even greater extent.

He starts in the synagogues, they don't want to hear him, he gets kicked out, so he goes to the Gentiles. And you see the extent of his second and third journeys, all through the most populated areas of the Gentile world, he's doing his mission. But, what is he doing? He's hooking back and heading for Jerusalem again.

Why? Why does he need to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost? This may have started, nobody knows who's alive right now, what the vow was about, where Paul shaved his head at King Crea. We think, well, maybe he was thinking about the Corinthians, he might have been thinking about the Ephesians, whatever it was, he took a vow. This might have been a vow to return to Jerusalem.

He might have just decided, I'm going to go to Jerusalem, because he certainly has this on his mind ever since then. But why? Why? Is Jerusalem anywhere in God's call to Paul? He tells the Ephesians, I'm willing to lay down my life for the call. But, in the same way that you look at Eve in the garden, Hath not God said? Oh, God says we shall need it, neither shall we touch it.

We sometimes lose sight of exactly what the calling is. I wrote down a quote when I was at a particular denominational convention earlier this year. A very prominent pastor nationwide, television ministry, located here in Dallas.

President of the Southern Baptist Convention this year. Oops, I said it. I was giving his keynote address.

And this is the quote. This is verbatim. This is Pastor Jack Graham.

And I'm not faulting Dr. Graham. He's a wonderful man. He's on the board of our foundation.

Great guy. But this tells you the difference in perspective. This is what he said.

If I have faith in Jesus Christ, but I am unwilling to walk across the street to share the gospel with my neighbor, what's the point? If I have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but I am unwilling to walk across the street and share Christ with my neighbor, what's the point? Think about that for a minute. If I'm a believer, faith in Jesus Christ, but I am unwilling to walk across the street to share Christ with my neighbor, what's the point? Can you answer that question for Dr. Graham? I can. There is a huge point.

The point is not to walk across the street and share Christ with my neighbor. How? It's stunning. It is like lightning striking.

This is the fundamental problem in our Christianity today, is not knowing the answer to that question. If I am saved, but I don't feel like walking across the street, knocking on the door and saying, hey neighbor, have you met Jesus? Have you asked Him into your heart? Then what's the point of my Christian life? You and I better be able to answer that question because there is a point besides evangelism, taking nothing away from it. I should be willing if God so leads, if God so moves, if God has been at work, if someone asks me a reason for the hope that is in me, if there is a cause, if there is an occasion.

Does God create an occasion? Did Paul hit the beach, run to Philippi, beat down the door and say, where is the jailer? He didn't did he? God created the situation and the circumstance, had to use an earthquake to do it so that the jailer is receptive, so that Paul is in the right place at the right time with the right message. Does Paul say, hey jailer, now that you see we are all here, read this tract. Let me give you the four spiritual laws.

The man says, what must I do to be saved? Who did the evangelism here? It was God the Holy Spirit wasn't it? God the Holy Spirit knew that man was there, hurried Paul along to make sure he was in jail on the right night. If Paul hooks a right and disobeys the Holy Spirit, hooks to the left and disobeys the Spirit of Christ, and doesn't get to Philippi in time, the whole earthquake is wasted. The jailer is going to run around looking for other prisoners who escaped in the night.

The whole deal is off. God makes sure that Paul is there. God gives an earthquake.

God has the Holy Spirit at work. The jailer is a tree ready to fall isn't he? What must I do to be saved? Shortest presentation of the gospel, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved and thy house. He believes and his whole house believes.

Paul doesn't have to harangue, he doesn't have to do the Mars Hill speech. He's there with the information, right? This is how God works. So, you must trust me on this.

If you hear somebody ask the question, if you're not evangelizing, if you're not involved in evangelism, what's the point of your Christian life? Please, please be able to answer that question. If you have been in Bible class for any length of time, you know the answer to this question. And what is the point? God is at work in us to will and to do his good purpose.

The quickest comparison that comes to my mind is, in our soul there is a reflector. And as we learn and as we grow and as we apply and as we struggle through, as we err and come short again and again and our face is marred with dust and sweat and blood going through our Christian life, God is building that reflector in our soul. And he's going to

shine his glory off of it, now and in the millennial kingdom and in the eternal ages to come.

That's the point. The point is to grow in grace and to grow in knowledge of the Savior. Now, how important is it to grow? It is all important.

This is why you don't have evangelistic pamphlets written by Paul. You think about it. The Holy Spirit could have had Paul write anything.

Why don't we have a Four Spiritual Laws pamphlet that Paul sent to Cancra or to Philippi or to Miletus or to Iconium or somewhere that got incorporated into Scripture. Wouldn't that be great? Instead of handing somebody a New Testament and Psalms, instead of handing somebody the Gospel of John, you just say, hey, you know, Paul wrote first Iconians and it's a great evangelistic pamphlet. I just hand it to you, beginning again.

It's the clearest, purest, most irresistible presentation of the Gospel known to man. Here you go. First Iconians.

Second Iconians. Third Iconians. He could have written a series of them, a rack full of them.

There's not a single one in the New Testament, is there? Why? It's not the point. It's not the point. Now, why is this important to us? None of us have had any kind of a warped, masochistic desire to go out and do this, have we? But we have to know what the point is.

And it helps when we're slogging through circumstances, when things are not good, not conducive. There is pressure. There is resistance.

There is friction. Things are breaking around us. You have these days, I know.

I'm not the only one that has these days where you're trying to do a thing and, well, before I do this, this has to be done. Well, I'm trying to do this and now this broke, so now I have to go do this to fix that, so that this can happen. And you're like 17 levels removed from the thing you were originally trying to do because it's one of these for want of a nail the kingdom was lost kind of things.

You start out, gee, my horse lost one nail out of his shoe. And, you know, it's just, well... Have you heard this song, There's a Hole in the Bucket? Dear Liza, dear Liza. And she's talking to her husband Henry, telling him to fix it.

And he says, well, what am I going to fix it with? And you get, well, you know, to get that, you've got to get this, and to get this, you've got to get that, and to get that, you've got to get this, and you come all the way back around. And in order to sharpen the saw to cut the wood, he needs a wet stone, and he's got to wet the wet stone with water. Where

do you get the water? In the bucket.

There's a hole in the bucket. You come all the way back around, and it's just, you can't, you know, can't fix the bucket because there's a hole in the bucket. Well, this is the friction that is a part of the fallen world.

This is what Paul talks about in Romans chapter 8. All creation groans. The creation groans, waiting for the redemption of the sons of God. Paul pictures the earth as just emitting a noise of pain, waiting for us to learn what we have to learn so that it will be released from the curse.

The earth is cursed for us. It's because of us, but it's also for us. God turns cursing to blessing.

The curse in the earth is a blessing for us. The resistance that we push through. How many stories do you know? Lance Armstrong with his cancer.

Glenn Cunningham, 1936, silver medalist, right behind Jesse Owens. The only reason he didn't get the gold is because Jesse Owens was there. 1936, silver medalist, as a runner, legs burned beyond recognition, practically, when he was a child.

Wilma Rudolph, same thing. Time and again, somebody is handicapped. Somebody is crippled.

Somebody, they say, you'll never walk again. Not only do they walk, they become a runner. They become an Olympic runner.

They become a medalist. Why? Because it is the trial of faith that works patience, that works endurance, that works these good things. The trial of your faith works patience.

Nothing to push against. You get indolent. You get flabby.

You lose strength. You say, well, but you don't need... I'm not laying on the bench and you're handing me 600 pounds to bench press here. Well, God doesn't hand us more than we're able to bear.

We think it's more, but if you've ever been in that situation, I know some of you have been in boot camp. I know some of you have been in similar situations where you think you can't do it, but when there's somebody barking in your ear and yelling at you, you find out, wow, I guess I did that after all. It was the lesser of two evils.

I used to think I couldn't swim. I didn't think I could get across the pool and back in the required number of strokes. And it was a very ignominious and humiliating thing to be on what they called sub-squad.

If you couldn't do the swimming, I have negative gravity. If I don't move in the water, I

sink like a rock. And I didn't do well in swimming lessons because I kept sinking.

The lady would say, just stretch out your arms and you'll float. I would stretch out my arms and sink and get water up my nose and in my ears and gave myself ear infections proving to people that I sunk. And the water would go in.

So I thought, you know, there's no way I'm going to be able to pass this swimming test. But you find out that you can. You're on a long run and you think, I'm not going to make it, but you can't drop out.

You're in an eight-oar shell rowing 13 miles and at the end of about 10.5 miles, you think, my arms feel like boiled spaghetti noodles and I cannot take another stroke. I promise you, the next time my brain issues a command, the arms are not moving. However, there are seven other guys, a coxswain in the boat.

There is a coach with a megaphone and a driver next to you. And mysteriously, from somewhere, the strength comes to take that stroke and about 300 more to get back. But we don't believe it.

Our mind, we have to be pressured from outside to do what we are capable of doing in many cases. You do not run as hard on your own as you do when someone is pushing you. If you're running with someone, if there is somebody dogging you, your mind tells you, I must stop, I must quit, I will surely die.

And it takes some outside force to demonstrate. And after a while, you learn this and then you can tell your own mind, oh, shut up, I know you can go further than what you're saying. But this is the point.

If you believe in Jesus Christ and you're not busy walking across the street, what is the point? The point is letting God push us to that point of growth, to that point of strength. It seems like we're all going to die. It seems like it is over.

But it's not. God does not test us beyond what we're able to bear. Now, that's one side.

We've talked about this before. We've seen it in the Scripture over and over again. One of the great things about Scripture is it has balance.

For every principle that you can name, for every doctrine that you find, there is another that balances it and keeps you from carrying it to an extreme. What does Paul say in this chapter? This is a long introduction. Look at verse 25 of Acts 20.

Now, behold, I know all of you among whom I went about preaching the kingdom will no longer see my face. This is my swan song. This is my farewell.

Ephesian elders, you're crying, I'm crying. I owe no man anything. Nobody's blood is on my hands.

I commend you to the grace of God. Shepherd the flock. Watch out for the wolves.

I'm going. You'll see my face no more. Guess what? Paul is going to be in Ephesus at least two more times before he dies.

This is bogus. It's wrong. Go read Timothy.

He'll be back in Ephesus. He's going to visit Timothy in Ephesus and go on to Macedonia. Paul will write back and say, remember when I left you in Ephesus and I came on? This isn't the last time he's going to see them.

And people have said, well, how can we... I mean, this inspired Scripture, so it must be true in some sense. Maybe all these men died before he got back. I don't think so.

They're elders, but they're not that old. In a matter of ten years, they're not all going to die. I wouldn't want to be invited to this meeting.

Well, I'll see your face no more. I'll be around, but you're going to be gone. Next time I come to Ephesus, it'll be a whole new crowd of elders.

It's not it. Paul is just wrong here. Of course, why? He says, I fully expect I'll have to lay down my life in Jerusalem.

Now, this is a flaw in perception. This is a flaw in apprehension on Paul's part. It is documented.

It is true. It is in the Word of God. Far be it from me.

He can pick on me a whole lot more than I can pick on him. But I am telling you from the Word of God, Paul is wrong here. This is not the last time he's going to see these people's face.

But he tells them, I am ready. And he's going to tell other people, I'm ready to lay down my life in Jerusalem. What does the Holy Spirit tell him in every city? Paul, if you go to Jerusalem, you're going to die.

Is that what the Holy Spirit says? Never. Not once. Bonds and chains await you.

He doesn't say death awaits you. He doesn't say the hatchet or the cross or the sword or some other instrument of death. Bonds and chains.

I am ready to die. I'll see your face no more. Paul has got a kink here, I think.

A little bit of a warp. And how does he justify it? This is the point. This is the point of my long introduction here.

Get down to chapter 21 now where he has left Miletus. He goes to Kos and Rhodes. By

the way, Rhodes, what's Rhodes famous for? Do you remember? These tend to just be names.

Kos, whoever heard of it. Potara, whoever heard of it. But Rhodes, you should remember Rhodes.

What's Rhodes famous for? Remember the seven wonders of the ancient world? One of them is in Rhodes. Do you remember what it was? Colossus. The Colossus is standing in Paul's day.

When they sail past Rhodes, great, giant wonder of the ancient world. When you go by Rhodes, you can't miss it. It's taller than a lighthouse.

It's this huge, anthropomorphic statue. Right? Right? I'm asking. Has it fallen down by this time? I think it's still there.

Colossus of Rhodes. Well, they go right past it. From there to Potara, having found a ship.

Notice, he had a smaller boat that he could tell whether or not it was going to go to Ephesus, whether or not it was going to go to Miletus. He could pick and choose where they stopped. He sort of hired a taxi boat.

But now, they find a ship that is going across to Phoenicia. They went aboard and set sail. This is a cargo ship.

You find that out in verse 3. It sails to Syria, lands at Tyre. Tyre of Old Testament fame. Hiram, king of Tyre.

All of the help that went down to build the temple and so on. Tyre, ancient, ancient city. One of the oldest in the world.

City of Tyre. They land there. That's where the ship is unloading its cargo.

They just hooked a ride on a cargo ship. After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days, Luke says. And they kept telling Paul, through the Spirit, this is *Dia Ta Pneuma*.

This is through the Spirit, capital S. There is no way you can make this the human spirit. This is through the Holy Spirit. *Dia* is agency, by means of, through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

This is the Holy Spirit communicating through these believers to Paul saying what? Not to set foot in Jerusalem. The word translated set foot here is the same word used for embarking in a boat. Not to embark.

Don't even begin to go to Jerusalem. Do not embark to go to Jerusalem. Of course, it's not a ship trip.

It's an overland journey. But the idea of setting foot in that direction, setting foot on board a ship, this is what the word means. It doesn't mean not to set foot in Jerusalem, like you could go right outside and just stand there and send messengers in.

This means don't start the journey. Don't embark to go to Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit tells him, you're going the wrong way.

This is unequivocal. It's clear. It's not that the believers were just worried about him.

The Spirit speaks through these people not to set foot in Jerusalem. But, verse 5, 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 each other.

There's a lot of fellowship. There's a lot of encouragement. There's a lot of warm, brotherly feeling here.

And there is prayer. They're praying fervently and intently. Paul is down there.

I'm sure he gave a great benedictory prayer. He still thinks this is his last trip. He's going to go to Jerusalem and probably be killed by the Jews.

Then we went on board the ship and they returned home again. When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemaeus. Now, this is just a little 30-mile boat trip.

You just go out from the shore, whip down 30 miles, and come back in. It's just faster than going over land. He doesn't cross a body of water.

It's just faster than going over land. We arrived at Ptolemaeus. After greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day.

So remember now, you start adding up all of these days since Paul was at Miletus. He stays a full week here with the people at Tyre. Then he's going to spend a full day at Ptolemaeus.

On the next day, we left and came to Caesarea. Entering the house of Philip the Evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. One of the seven what? We've all been looking on our spare time looking at the seven spirits and the seven lamps and bands and all of that.

One of the seven, seven what? Remember back in Acts, chapter 6, when the apostles wanted to devote themselves to prayer and study the Word, Stephen, Philip, five other

guys, are the beacons who will care for the widows, distribute the food. Essentially, they are the first tier of leadership in the Jerusalem church. Philip, one of the seven.

The seven, it almost becomes a term. You get the idea that it's a term like the twelve. So this is Philip.

This is the Philip of Samaria fame. This is the Philip of Ethiopian eunuch fame. And he has settled down here in Caesarea.

And he's got a family. This man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. Now, this immediately waves a flag.

When my dad was youthful and in high spirits one day, he went into his shop and made a little box. It's a black box with a big orange buzzer on the side. And it has a flip top.

And it says, panic button. And when you push the panic button, this little flag flips out the top and a buzzer goes off. And ever since then, when I see something like this, that's my mental image.

It runs on a dry cell. He made it like back in 1950 or something. I don't remember when it was.

I think it may have sat on top of his, on top of the Hammond organ or something when he was earning his living and moonlighting. I have to ask him about that. But anyway, it's a panic button.

He's still got it. And you push the orange. It's just a plain thing.

You push the button. Out this thing comes. Well, you should have an inkling here when you read this verse.

The man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. Why does this raise a flag? Why does the buzzer go off? Because every other place in the Bible, when you see women fulfilling a role that is normally assigned to men, it is a sign of deterioration. It is a sign that the men are not doing their job.

There's nothing wrong with the women doing it. Deborah was a great prophetess. Israel got a great victory through her.

But it is not the ideal. There's nothing wrong with someone getting divorced in the biblical circumstances. There's not a thing in the world wrong with it.

Nothing attached to it is wrong. But it's not the ideal. Jesus says the law of Moses permits you to divorce your wives.

It's permitted. It's lawful. The law is just, right, and good.

But it was not so from the beginning. There are things that take place, but they're not the ideal. Ideally, you wouldn't have to have divorce.

Ideally, you wouldn't have to have Deborah. Ideally, you wouldn't have to have four virgin daughters as prophetesses. God raises them up and uses them.

There's not a thing in the world wrong with it. But it is a warning flag. Just like if you have an exceedingly high divorce rate in a country, that's a warning flag.

That tells you that the spiritual condition of the country is flagging, so to speak. Right? If you have a high incidence of homosexuality and teenage suicide and drug addiction and pornography and perversion in your country, these are warning signs that there is something wrong in the country, right? Well, those are the obvious, well, look at these sins, look at these evil lifestyles. But there are other things.

When you see deterioration, when you see that there are trained pastors who have no church to go to, nothing sinful in being a pastor and being trained and not having a church to preach in, is there? Not a thing in the world wrong with that. But it is a sign. If you have a lot of trained pastors and no demand for their ministry, this is what will rise up in the day of judgment and condemn a nation and condemn a community and condemn believers who are too apathetic and indifferent to assemble and to feed their soul on the Word of God, administered and taught and brought forth by these men and God.

People are going to say, well, I just couldn't find a good church. And God is going to say, you see those three guys right over there? They were right there in your community and had to work at the post office because none of you people were interested. And God is going to point to them.

He is not going to say, well, if you had been interested, I would have raised up. He is going to say, look, they were there. They lived in your community and could have no church because you all were apathetic and indifferent and completely interested in other things.

Well, these women are prophetesses. And what it tells you is, as you get down toward Jerusalem, the Apostle Paul should see this. And it ought to tell him something about the Jerusalem church.

The men from James that he has seen up there in Antioch, it ought to tell him something about the spiritual health of the Jerusalem church. That is a sick place. And yet that's where Paul wants to go and he wants to get their approval.

He wants to impress them. He wants to bring the offering to them. And he is bound in his spirit.

He is determined. He is set. He is unmovable and fixed and stubborn in his goal.

I think possibly, if that vow was not on behalf of the people that he had left, the Gentiles that he had left that he would try to return to them or write them letters or whatever, then I wonder if that shaved head vow was not his determination to go to Jerusalem and minister to the Jews. You see it in his heart when you read Romans 9, 10 and 11. I would give up my inheritance in the kingdom for the sake of my brethren.

And he is just about doing it here, I think. Warning after warning after warning. Every city.

If he is doing the right thing, why does the Holy Spirit keep warning him? Does he know bonds and chains await him and he is fixed in his purpose? So why does the Holy Spirit keep telling him? Well, this ding, ding, ding. If the bell keeps ringing, it is trying to tell you something. If you are driving down the road and your dashboard starts going ding, ding, ding, you need to look around and figure out which light is on.

Is it oil? Is it gas? Is it an open door? Did somebody fall out? Why is this bell ringing? Well, he is getting a ringing bell in every city. Now he comes to Philip. Philip's daughters are prophetesses.

Why? Because Philip can teach them. He can supervise them and they can prophesy where there must not be very many men in Israel who are spiritually mature enough to operate the prophecy gift. And God is having to use women in this godly family of Philip because where are the men? How come there is not a prophet? You have got to bring up old Agabus.

Agabus is like 100 years old now and he is going to come up here in a minute. Well, say all of that to say this. We need two things.

We need to know what our mission is. We need to know what is the point of living life as a believer. If it is not evangelism, what is it? We need to know the answer to that question.

It is to live a life that reflects the glory of God. It is to learn and grow and become mature. And that only takes place in testing.

We grow under testing. No testing, no growth. Secondly, we have to know when God is telling us stop.

When God is saying you need to do something different. And that is what we are seeing in the life of the Apostle Paul here. And we will see the details of how God communicates to him in this regard when we come back from the break.