

Going to Jerusalem

On the way to and in Jerusalem

Foundation

Bible passage : Acts 20:17-27 & 21:10-30

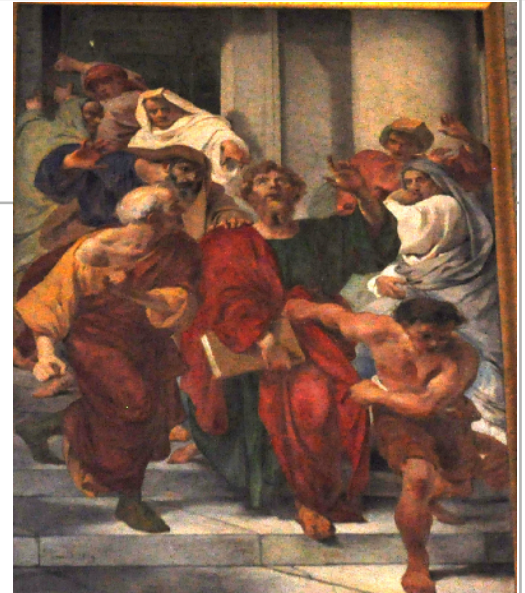
As we have seen in previous units Paul knew that the message about Jesus was not welcomed by everyone, and particularly not by many of his fellow Israelites. He wanted to go back to Jerusalem but also knew that this might be dangerous and that he might be killed. But he was ready to die in order to spread the light of Christ to others.

Although Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem, he first did a quick tour of some of the churches that had arisen in Macedonia and Greece and then arrived at Miletus (in western Turkey). There, he was met by some of the leaders of the Christians in Ephesus. He told them that he did not know what lay ahead and clearly wondered whether he might see any of them again. Nevertheless, he said that his desire was “that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (v24).

“I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” (v27)

Paul continued by ship and arrived at Caesarea north of Jerusalem. There the Holy Spirit spoke through a prophet called Agabus, warning Paul that if he went to Jerusalem, he would be bound and arrested. Agabus used Paul’s own belt to illustrate the point. The Spirit did not tell Paul not to go but showed him what would happen if he did. But others, realising the dangers, tried to persuade Paul not to go. Again,

Paul dragged from the temple in Jerusalem. Oil on canvas in a Basilica in Rome painted c1857-60.



Paul said he was ready to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 21.10-16).

Luke, the writer of Acts, knew that Paul would in fact have many more opportunities to share the gospel with others but it seems that he was one of the people who tried to persuade Paul not to go to Jerusalem. But Paul was convinced he should go and did.

In Jerusalem Paul met James, the half-brother of Jesus, and other leaders of the church and they explained how lies had been told about Paul’s teaching (21.20-21). So the leaders had an idea that would show why people were wrong. Paul did what they suggested and went to the Temple in Jerusalem to make some offerings along with others just as other Jews did. But when Paul was seen some Jews they wrongly thought he had brought a non-Jew into the Temple and there was uproar. They grabbed Paul and dragged him out of the Temple intending to kill him. Paul had been willing to die in order to spread the light of Christ, and it looked as if he was about to die.



Paul’s desire was to tell all people “the gospel of the grace of God”, whatever the cost to himself.