



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V28 N40 October 4, 2026

UNHINDERED

“Ready for Chains”

Acts 21:1-16

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Hope

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with him.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

1 Peter 1:3-5



Why did Paul insist on going to Jerusalem?

When what was originally called the connecting church strategy for transforming people into fully developing followers of Jesus was first described in *The Connecting Church* by Randy Frazee published by Zondervan in 2001, it was praised by Dallas Willard, Howard Hendricks, J. I. Packer and other recognized Christian thinkers at the time. Willard called it: “the best plan for corporate spiritual growth that I know of in a contemporary setting.” Howard Hendricks praised *The Scrolls* Bible study, and J. I. Packer called the strategy: “a plan that works.”

Somewhat earlier, when Packer first examined the 30 Core Competencies — the 10 Beliefs, 10 Practices, and 10 Virtues, of a fully developing follower of Jesus that describe mission accomplishment — he asked, “Where’s Hope? You can’t leave out Hope.” And when asked to offer a creed for his Core Virtue Hope, he simply replied, “I can cope with hope,” meaning that “I can cope with the vicissitudes of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.” Following his advice, the Core Virtues of Kindness and Goodness were combined to make room for Hope within the 30 Competencies. Since then Hope has remained a Core Competency, although its creed has since been revised to read: “I have a growing anticipation of God’s promises and my secure eternity with him.”

Acts 21:1-16 raises the perplexing question: “Why would . . . how could, Paul insist on returning to Jerusalem when he knew it would inevitably be dangerous and was repeatedly advised by others against it?” The apostle admitted as much in Ephesus when he told the church’s elders: “And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what

will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me” (Ac 20:22-23). Stopping in Tyre along the way, the disciples there told him “not to go on to Jerusalem” (21:4). And in Caesarea, after binding his own hands and feet with Paul’s belt, Agabus prophesied: “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles’” (v. 11).

In more general terms, the question is “Why would . . . how can, disciples today follow Christ either not knowing what will come of it, or knowing that nothing good *humanly speaking* will likely come of it?” The answer to this question, as well as the one concerning Paul, are the same . . . hope. As Packer said so simply yet so eloquently, “I can cope with hope.” Just as hope enabled Paul to get through all of the hardships he faced to follow Jesus — “Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches” (2Co 11:24-28) — so also hope will enable disciples today to get through all of the hardships they face following Jesus.

Read Acts 21:1-16

1 And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. 3 When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo. 4 And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. 5 When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed 6 and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

7 When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. 8 On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied. 10 While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" 12 When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

15 After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. 16 And some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "Cos," "Rhodes," and "Patara" in v. 1.
- Circle "Phoenicia," in v. 2, and "Cyprus" and "Syria" in v. 3.
- Underline "Tyre" in v. 3, "Ptolemais" in v. 7, and "Caesarea" in v. 8.
- Circle "Philip" in v. 8.
- Circle "daughters" in v. 9.
- Circle "Agabus" in v. 10.
- Highlight Paul's words in v. 13.
- Highlight the people's words in v. 14.
- Circle "Mnason" in v. 16.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. “Parted from *them*” (v. 1). Parted from whom?
 2. Why did Paul have to make connections in Patara for Phoenicia?
 3. In Tyre, the disciples were telling Paul “*through the Spirit . . .* not to go on to Jerusalem.” Explain what that means.
 4. Summarize what Luke records about Paul’s host in Caesarea and his family.
 5. What has Luke already told his readers about Agabus (Ac 11:27-30)?
 6. Describe what Agabus did and explain what it meant.
 7. How did those who saw what he did and heard its interpretation react?
 8. Did the advice they gave Paul reflect the will of God for him? Explain.
 9. Explain how Paul responded to their advice.
 10. **Discussion:** When seeking to do the will of God, should we take guidance from others? Talk about it.
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Commentary On The Text

Paul's arrival and subsequent arrest in Jerusalem marked the end of his ministry as a *free man* recorded in the book of Acts. He made three missionary journeys: the first recorded in Acts 13:4-14:28 (April A.D. 48-Sept. A.D. 49); the second recorded in Acts 15:36-18:22 (April A.D. 50-Sept. A.D., 52); and the third in Acts 18:23-21:17 (spring A.D. 53-May A.D. 57), covering a period of a little more than 9 years (April A.D. 48-May A.D. 57). During that time the apostle is estimated to have traveled nearly 8,000 miles: between 1,500 and 1,600 on his first journey; between 2,800 and 3,000 on his second journey; and between 2,700 and 3,300 on his third journey. His final voyage as a prisoner to Rome recorded in Acts 27:1-28:31 covered roughly an additional 2,300 miles and two and a half additional years (Aug. A.D. 59-March A.D. 62).

After his first journey, he wrote one epistle, Galatians (autumn A.D. 49); on his second he wrote two, 1 and 2 Thessalonians (summer A.D. 51), on his third, three, 1 Corinthians (spring A.D. 56), 2 Corinthians (Sept./Oct. A.D. 56) and Romans (winter A.D. 56-57). During his first Roman imprisonment he wrote four epistles, Ephesians (autumn A.D. 60), Colossians and Philemon (autumn A.D. 61) and Philippians (early spring A.D., 62) (Harold Hoehner, "A Chronological Table of the Apostolic Age," in *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*, H. Wayne House, 129-32).

One commentator provides a brief overview of Acts 21:1-16; he writes: "In another 'we' section, Acts now outlines Paul's trip to Jerusalem. The unit presents the itinerary with brief notes about visits to Tyre and Caesarea" (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 635). The ESV divides the sixteen verses into three paragraphs. "The travel in the first section of the trip is quickly covered in verses 1-6; the scene in Caesarea is longer (vv. 7-14). The arrival in Jerusalem is noted in verses 15-16" (Bock, 635). The longest paragraph (vv. 7-14), the paragraph apart from the travelogue paragraphs (vv. 1-6; vv. 15-16), contains the point of the passage: Paul insists on going to Jerusalem in spite of the prediction of Agabus and the urging of the disciples, including Luke (note "we," v. 12).

Verses 1-16 expose a tension hanging over the narrative, namely, the struggle taking place between the apostle, who is determined to go to Jerusalem, and disciples, who love and honor him and through the Spirit are warning him against it. Disciples in Tyre warned Paul "not to go on to Jerusalem" (v. 4), and in Caesarea, those who heard the prediction of

Agabus "warned him not to go up to Jerusalem" (v. 12). In his prophecy, Agabus pictured how the Jews in Jerusalem would bind Paul and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles (v. 11). As a result: "Both Paul's travel companions (including the 'we' narrator) and the local Christians draw an immediate conclusion from this: Paul must not go up to Jerusalem. They appeal to Paul to change his mind, but he rejects their appeal with a final affirmation of his willingness to accept whatever awaits him in Jerusalem. At this point his friends finally accept his decision with the statement, 'Let the will of the Lord be done'" (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, vol. 2, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 264). They must have recognized that these were dangers Paul was willing to face (vv. 4b; 11-15). As Jesus resolved to go to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51-53), so Paul also resolved to go to Jerusalem and ultimately on to Rome.

Did Paul do the right thing? Most commentators argue that he did. They point out that the Spirit did not *prohibit* Paul from going to Jerusalem; instead, the Spirit *prepared* Paul for what awaited him there. Agabus predicted what would take place, and the believers urged Paul not to go, but Paul was not prohibited from going. He chose to go to Jerusalem and face his persecution and arrest even as Jesus chose to do the same, which suggests that he had a powerful reason for doing so.

Was it merely to deliver the collection? One commentator argues that it must have been more than this. "The collection for Jerusalem, so important in Paul's letters. Is not mentioned until 24:17, if there. It is not presented as a major factor in Paul's plans. Instead, we find references to what Paul decided in the Spirit (19:21), to the fact that he felt bound in the Spirit (20:22), and to his plan as the will of the Lord (21:14). The lack of an obvious human reason for going to Jerusalem makes the sense of divine purpose all the stronger . . . In his farewell speech Paul said that he was willing to risk his life in order to 'complete my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear witness to the gospel of the grace of God' (20:24). The journey to Jerusalem is necessary to complete the ministry to which he has been called. Because Paul goes to Jerusalem aware of what will befall him there, his arrest and trials are not an unexpected interruption of his plans but a part of what he must face to complete his ministry" (Tannehill, 266), for ultimately what awaited him in Jerusalem landed him in Rome.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *Cos, Rhodes* . . . “‘Cos’ was an island 40 miles from Miletus. ‘Rhodes’ (meaning ‘Roses’) refers to the city on the island of Rhodes, which was another 90 miles farther southeast. A gigantic statue of Apollo, The Colossus of Rhodes, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, stood astride the entrance to Rhodes’ harbor years earlier, but it was ruins when Paul visited this town. From there, Paul’s party continued east to ‘Patara,’ a 60-mile journey. Paul could have made these trips in three days. In Patara, the missionaries were able to transfer to a ship bound directly for ‘Tyre,’ which was 400 miles farther east” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 202 ed., 400, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf). “Since coasting vessels were not large enough for travel on the open sea, they evidently changed at Patara to a seagoing vessel in order to make the direct journey to Phoenicia” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 432).

v. 3 *Tyre* “Sailing the four hundred miles from Patara to Tyre, the famous Phoenician seaport of Syria, they passed by Cyprus to the south. John Chrysostom of Syrian Antioch said that the voyage took five days (*Homilies* 45.2), which is as intelligent an approximation as any” (Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 516). Unloading the ship’s cargo (v. 3) was “a task which took a week (v. 4). The persecution of the early church in Jerusalem had scattered the believers to Phoenicia (11:19), so Paul sought out believers there” (Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 415).

v. 8 *Philip* “He was **one of the Seven** (cf. 6:1-5) who ministered to widows in Jerusalem. His evangelistic work was described in chapter 8. Evidently he had settled in Caesarea (cf. 8:40), even though it was the most Roman city in Israel, and had lived there for some 20 years when Paul arrived” (Toussaint, 415).

v. 9 *daughters* “Perhaps the most significant observation in the present narrative is that there were women in the early church who were recognized as having the gift of prophecy. In his Gospel, Luke mentioned Anna, who was also a prophetess who foretold the future redemptive role of the infant Jesus (2:36-38). Peter, in his Pentecost sermon, pointed to the prophesying of ‘daughters’ as a sign of the gift of the Spirit in these last days (Acts 2:17)”

(Polhill, 435). “Despite the mention of their gift, it is another prophet, Agabus, who gives the warning to Paul at Caesarea” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 637).

v. 10 *Agabus* Cf. Ac 11:27-28. “He took Paul’s girdle, the long cloth that was wound several times around his waist, and bound with it his hands and feet. Then, just like an Old Testament prophet, he gave the interpretation of the act, introduced by the usual, ‘Thus says the Lord,’ here expressed in terms of revelation through the Holy Spirit. Paul would be bound by the Jews of Jerusalem and handed over to the Gentiles. The parallel to the fate of Jesus could hardly be more explicit (cf. Matt 20:18ff.; Luke 18:32). This was *not so much a warning on Agabus’s part as a prediction*” (Polhill, 435, italics added). “Stott (1990: 333) argues a distinction between a prediction and a prohibition in the various messages referring to utterances through the Spirit in this chapter. Agabus has predicted what will take place, and the believers urge Paul not to go to Jerusalem. He is not, however, prohibited from doing so. He will go to Jerusalem and face his persecution and arrest” (Bock, 638-39).

vv. 13, 14 *What are you* . . . “‘Why are you pounding away at my heart?’ (author’s translation). The verb (*synthryptō*) was often used of washing clothes and referred to pounding them with stones in order to whiten them” (Polhill, 436). “They are pounding on Paul’s emotions. They accept his response, however, and cease their pleading with the remark ‘The will of the Lord be done’ . . . There is no indication in Luke’s narrative that Paul is disobedient here, as the Spirit has told Paul what he will be facing (Acts 20:22-23)” (Bock, 638, 639).

v. 16 *Mnason* “Some think the home of Mnason was at a halfway point where Paul and his party may have spent the night. More probably, Mnason was a resident of Jerusalem. Interestingly Mnason was from Cyprus, the island where Barnabas was born” (Toussaint, 415). “Must have been a disciple of some means to be able to accommodate Paul and a group of about nine men traveling with him” (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ac 21:16).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Don't let what you fear *might* happen or believe likely *will* happen prevent you from being obedient to the will of God for your life.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does the author of this passage want me to *know*?
2. What does the author of this passage want me to *do*?
3. What does the author of this passage want me to *be*?



PARENT CONNECTION

What do you hope for your kids? This question was asked at the first parenting class I attended when my kids were all in early elementary school. The instructor encouraged us to spend a few minutes making a list of all the things we hoped for our kids. Let me encourage you to do the same; go ahead and make a list. I'll wait. Now, if you are like I was, you probably were able to get 50 things written down pretty quickly—excel academically, be kind, marry someone who is a good fit, go to college, practice humility, become financially successful, live a peaceful life, etc. These things are all valid, truly they are. But the instructor was quick to point out that many of these things on our list were mere wishes. While we might have wishful thinking for many aspects of our kids' lives, there is only one true hope—that our kids know the Lord. We want our kids to have a deep, abiding relationship with Jesus and reflect His image. We can wish for many things, but the hope of salvation and a life-changing relationship with Christ is the pinnacle, the culmination, the highest peak on the highest mountain of hopes. Everything we do—every meal, school drop off or pick up, birthday party gift, neighborhood walk, drive to practice, moment in the drive-through line—everything we do must have a focus of hope that our kids will know Christ and grow to reflect His image as they become the people He created them to be. We hope this for your kids, too, and we're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 21:1-16.

1. What did the people in Tyre tell Paul?
2. What did the prophet Agabus tell Paul?
3. What did Paul tell the people he was ready for?

What Do You Think?

Do you think Paul was serious when he said he would die for the sake of the Lord? Why or why not?

What Do You Do?

What's the difference between hope and wishful thinking?
Why can Christians have hope?

CORE COMPETENCY: Hope

I cope with the problems of life and death with the help of Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE: Romans 12:18

"If possible, as far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.