

ACTS 20-26

WILL YOU FAIL OR FINISH?

TO ROME BY WAY OF JERUSALEM

Afterward Paul felt compelled by the Spirit to go over to Macedonia and Achaia before going to Jerusalem. “And after that,” he said, “I must go on to Rome!”

ACTS 19.21 NLT

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His call, and may fulfill every good resolve and work of faith by His power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 THESSALONIANS 1.11-12 RSV

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[God] gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done—by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about Him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.

ROMANS 15.15-22

*So from Jerusalem
all the way around to
Illyricum,
I have fully proclaimed
the gospel of Christ.
It has always been
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to preach the gospel
where Christ
was not known.*



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But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord's people there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way.

ROMANS 15.23-28

TO JERUSALEM BY WAY OF MACEDONIA

- ▶ A.D. 55: After three years of evangelism in Ephesus, Paul traveled to Greece to collect an offering for the church in Jerusalem.
- ▶ When he arrived in Macedonia, he wrote his fourth letter to the church at Corinth (the letter we have as Second Corinthians). He traveled the route of his previous mission, visiting the churches that had been established and encouraging the disciples.
- ▶ From Corinth, he wrote his letter to the church in Rome. He entrusted its delivery to the delegation led by Phoebe, “a servant of the church in Cenchea . . . a great help to many people, including me” (Romans 16.2)
- ▶ Instead of sailing from Cenchea (a seaport south of Corinth) to Syria, a plot by the Jews to kill Paul sent him back through Macedonia; from there he sailed to Troas in Asia, then walked south to Miletus, where he met with the elders from Ephesus for a final goodbye.



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You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace. Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again.”

ACTS 20.18-25

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So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. Now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

ACTS 20.31-32, 36-38

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After we had torn ourselves away from them, we put out to sea We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo. We sought out the disciples there and stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. [Continuing on] we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. . . . After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.' " When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done." After this, we started on our way up to Jerusalem.

ACTS 21.1, 3-4



The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks. The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”

ACTS 23.10-11

- ▶ After seeing James, Paul agreed to observing a vow with other devout Jews
- ▶ Jews from the Diaspora saw Paul in the Temple and seized him for “defiling the Temple”
- ▶ They beat him, intending to kill him; this attracted the attention of the Roman garrison
- ▶ The commander arrested Paul who told him that he was a citizen of Tarsus; the commander allowed Paul, when he requested, to address the crowd who began throwing things at him
- ▶ The commander decided to flog Paul, who then warned them that he was a Roman citizen
- ▶ The commander ordered a meeting of the Jewish council which quickly got out of hand
- ▶ That night the Lord visited Paul in a vision: “Be courageous; you will testify of me in Rome.”
- ▶ A group of Jews made plans to ambush the Romans and assassinate Paul; Paul’s nephew discovered the plot and reported it to the commander
- ▶ Under the cover of darkness, a Roman escort of 470 soldiers left Jerusalem for Caesarea to transfer Paul into the custody of the provincial governor
- ▶ Discovering that Paul had been taken to Caesarea, the Jews traveled there to accuse him
- ▶ Held indefinitely in custody and repeatedly interviewed, Paul demanded his right as a citizen to appeal to Caesar
- ▶ Paul was placed in the custody of a centurion from the Imperial Regiment to be escorted to Rome

PRINCIPLES TO FINISH AND NOT FAIL

- ▶ The only thing that ultimately counts is the Gospel making me acceptable to God.

[God] gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15.15)

- ▶ The only worth in life is that God is glorified through my service to Him and His mission.

Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done. (Romans 15.17-18)

- ▶ Resolve and faith are indispensable components in a life lived for God's glory.

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His call, and may fulfill every good resolve and work of faith by His power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you . . . (2 Thessalonians 1.11-12)

- ▶ The value you place on your own life will determine whether you fail or finish.

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace. (Acts 20.24)

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I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

"So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

ACTS 26.16-23

Today I pray that—

- ▶ *No matter what comes, you will be courageous and resolved to stand for Jesus.*
- ▶ *You will be yielded to the Holy Spirit that He may set your life apart from every weakness associated with sin and this world.*
- ▶ *You will have faith to boldly pursue the mission of God, trusting Him to use you beyond your human capabilities.*
- ▶ *You will prove yourself to be worthy of His calling.*

Amen.