



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?**  
**Wk. 74 “Making Hard Decisions with Good Company”**  
**By Pastor Jody May 04/14/2024**

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**Acts 21:1-16 ESV**

**21** 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.

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**[READ THE TEXT]**

**Pastor – “People of God, this is the Word of God.”**

**People – “Thanks be to God.”**

**[PRAY]**



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**[ILLUSTRATION]**

What to do when you know you’re going to lose...

**What I learned that day** – What I learned was I don’t mind losing (**according to the world’s standards**) as long as you have identified the alternate goal and a way to achieve that goal.

**[INTRO. & BACKGROUND]**

Today in our story the Apostle Paul is getting to the end of his season, and he knows it.

**Acts 20:24-25 ESV**

<sup>24</sup> But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, **if only I may finish my course and the ministry** that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. <sup>25</sup> And now, behold, I know that **none of you** among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom **will see my face again.**

It seems that Paul’s personal goals have now changed over the course of his travels in Acts, for him to see Christ’s return will not be a reality. Every Christian over the course of 2,000 years has had to accept that, that even though we are told by Christ we live in the end days ([2 Timothy 3:1-5](#); [1 John 2:18](#)) the odds are we will meet our earthly ends before He returns. For Paul he has seen the new objective/new goals, and the Lord has painted for Him what victory will look like for Paul. **Paul has been called to be taken by the enemy so that the Gospel will get its’ check mate move in Rome.**

The problem though that he is running into now, is that even though he has communicated this to his friends, it doesn’t seem they understand it, nor do they want to accept it. Just like Christ ([Matthew 16:22-23](#)), his friends wanted a different outcome other than sacrificing a life to further the advancement of the Kingdom. They are having a hard time to see that this may be the will of God just as Peter didn’t want to see it for Christ.



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Paul then finds himself straddling the fence in his Christian walk, he is caught in the middle between listening to the will of his friends and trying to decipher the will of God. That’s a hard thing to do btw, to not listen to other Christians when they are all for you taking the road of less tribulation. If he walks too much on one side instead of the other, he may miss his opportunity to finish his course, which for him would be sin and a betrayal to the one that saved him. He must accomplish the goal that God had set out for him as follows:

**Acts 9:15-16 ESV**

<sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him (Ananias), “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine **to carry my name** before the **Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel**. <sup>16</sup> For I will show him how much he must **suffer** for the sake of my name.”

The fact that Luke recorded this means that Paul knows what was said about his calling into ministry, that it would be a path of suffering and it is to that path he has said ‘yes’ to, *I want to finish my call*. His finish line was to suffer for Christ, so that the Gentiles and their rulers would learn what a life living for Christ would look like. It also further calls the people of his heritage the Jews to repent and condemns those Jews who reject Jesus as the Messiah.

Paul therefore has to walk a line between Christian Friendship and Christian Discipleship all the while trying to discover God’s Sovereign Destiny. He still needs the Care of Christian Friendships to get him to his goal, which always puts him and his loved ones into contention with the reality of the Cost of Christian Discipleship. It is this precarious line he must walk, he needs their **care**, he wants their **company**, but he can’t take their **collaborative advice**.

**MP:**

**The Care of Christian Friendship is needed in life to help fulfill the  
Cost of Discipleship to glorify God.**

This morning, we are going to talk about the benefits and the need that everyone has for Christian Friendships, what exactly we are to be getting out of them. We will also talk about the Cost of Discipleship, the call to come and



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die that is more rewarding than any earthly lifestyle you can imagine. Then perhaps when we walk out of here, we might understand the relationship between the two better, so that we like Paul can figure out how to finish this race well for the Kingdom. Since like we said the odds of living to see the second coming really aren't that good.

### **1. The Care of Christian Friendship.**

- **There's no need for Introductions.**

This story is almost a parallel to [\*The Pilgrim's Progress\*](#) by the puritan John Bunyan. As the pilgrim (Christian) makes his way in his Christian life, he is never successful on making it on his own, but through life he is directed by several good friends that are congenial and show great interest in getting Christian to his destination. Bunyan used the story of the *The Pilgrim's Progress* for several different reasons but one of the takeaways you get from this classic masterpiece is that as a Christian, **you will not make it on your own.**

Yes, Paul's story shows that too, but it also shows that real Christians never need introductions, formal greetings, or a time of getting comfortable with each other. As well Paul has a nose for finding them, he's a bloodhound for finding the Christians in a community wherever he went.

- v.4 And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days

- v. 7 When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, ... we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day.

- v. 8 They were welcomed by Phillip, into his home, among his innocent daughters.

- v.16 the group from Caesarea took Paul and Luke to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.

There is a reason for this type of hospitality.

### **LP**

**The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the bond that unites us, letting God's people focus on Hospitality.**



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I pray that you all get to experience this one day. There is nothing stronger than a shared love of Christ, and nothing bridges cultural bridges faster than a love for His Gospel. When Rolando and I were in Ecuador I cannot tell you how cool it was to embrace the people like Alfredo & Darwin who were important to the life of the church of Palestina. It was such a great feeling to communicate not so much through a shared language but through a shared love and affection for our Lord. We hugged, we prayed, we read scripture, we sang songs in Spanish, we broke bread, we traveled, and we worked on a mission together to further the cause of Christ in Peña’s Blanca, and what a joy that was all because **we love the same man!** Through translation I found out about their struggles, their concerns, and their fears all the while doing the same with them, FOR when love for your Lord is greater than your fear of man you will tell anyone anything they want to know because that which you love about Christ is the shared forgiveness and justification that He gives through Grace to all men!

Even if you never get to travel overseas on a mission trip this same love can be experienced by you as explained by Tony Merida.<sup>1</sup>

*“Because Christians share a common passion in Christ, people who may not have otherwise spent time together can become great friends—no matter who they were before meeting Jesus. Young techies, then, can become friends with retirees; rich stars can become friends with doctors; hip-hoppers can share a deep bond of friendship with farmers; businessmen can be friends with hipsters; valley girls can enjoy friendships with home girls.”*

Christian friendship is a blessing to have and a necessity to receive if you are going to live a life that represents the Lord Jesus. You will be blessed to practice hospitality for those that need it, and you will be blessed to receive it when you have need of it. BUT the Care of Christian Friendship extends past the front door, and through the kitchen but it extends on out into the world.

- **There’s no need to feel alone.**

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition/Exalting Jesus in Acts* (Nashville, TN; B&H Publishing Group, 2017) 326.



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One of the signs of a true Christian is not only the care of hospitality but the care of spiritual ministry and counsel. It seems that Paul not only had a nose for where to find them, but he also was pretty good at knowing how to pick them.

<sup>5</sup>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** <sup>6</sup>and said **farewell** to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

Not only was this family hospitable but they were spiritually affectionate. Affection doesn't necessarily mean physical touch, although physical touch is one of the ways you can show affection. **Affection is simply the way in which one shows fondness or tenderness towards another.** It is important for Christians to display affection toward one another for it is a way that the Lord is able to display care for His subjects.

This family accompanied Paul and Luke, not just showing them to the door but walking them outside the city, displaying the honor of having them, and letting know those who did not like Christians where their loyalties lie. They went to the beach, knelt down together as a sign of fealty to a Risen Savior, and bid each other farewell. Visible signs of care that could be evidenced by others. Their display of affection let's Paul and Luke know, *we care, we will pray, and we are here when you come back through.* Family, do our actions speak that to each other, do our actions display fealty to the Lord publicly, are we willing to show our spiritual affection for each other even when the world is trying to drown out the witness of Christ? Do your Christian friends in this room actually know that you love them without you having to say it?

**LP**

**The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the bond that enables empathy letting God's people focus on spiritual affection.**

Empathy says I get what you are going through, empathy says I am willing to change my daily patterns to comfort you, but empathy does not remove the path that others must walk. Christian Care is the ability to endure for brief



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periods of time the emotional strain of those around us. But a true sense of empathy only comes AFTER taking the time to understand the plight of those we care about.

- **There’s no need to keep your thoughts to yourself.**

<sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied. <sup>10</sup>While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. <sup>11</sup>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.’” <sup>12</sup>When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem.

Dealing with the weighty things in life is not merely a private matter when it comes to the church. Agabus, you met in Acts 11 where he had foretold of a drought hitting Jerusalem, he traveled to Phillip’s house of Acts 8 fame. Agabus was a NT prophet and wise man, and Phillip was an evangelist that did some of the first evangelistic work after Pentecost with a wizard in Samaria and an Eunuch from Ethiopia he met on the road.

BTW just in case you may be wondering about the phrase that Phillip’s daughters prophesied. According to early church traditions and scripture ([1 Timothy 2:12](#)) being a prophet, that does not equate the authority of a teacher in a church. As well this is most likely a demonstration of a spiritual gifting from the time of Pentecost for the 1st century church, so this is not a normative thing. Basically, here’s how we should interpret this, people who prophesied were of a position of an advisor/consultant as needed on matters of church life and understanding but were not operating in an official position in a church with governing duties. If one were to use Acts 21:9 as an argument for egalitarianism, you have taken this passage out of its’ historical context.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Brian Borgman, *All Things to All Men*, Sermon @ Grace Community Church, Minden, NV. Nov. 30, 2008. <https://www.sermonaudio.com/saplayer/playpopup.asp?SID=69091540449>



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So Christian Care has an element that is a little scary about it, because you don't need introductions and because you should be empathetic, you will need to air private matters on a regular basis. Paul was letting everyone know he was most likely looking at his demise and being that these were Christians that cared they wanted to talk him out of it, they wanted to speak truth in love, they wanted to keep him from harm. Agabus didn't hide the truth from him but just like the prophets of old he used a visual aide to make sure Paul knew his future 'if' he went to Jerusalem.

**LP**

**The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the bond that enables honest dialogue letting God's people focus on discernment.**

I know that many of us are ok with hospitality, were even ok with affection, but to let others in on what we think, to let them judge whether our ideas are good or poo, that's another thing altogether! But that's the idea, you need others to tell you whether you are running into trouble or not, to let you know whether you are using a worldly philosophy for making decisions or not, or just to tell you in love you're CRAZY! That's where we have to get to, because that's where God begins to grow one's faith. Faith grows when we begin to rely on God's Word first for direction, seeing His will for our lives in its' pages, and along with prayer, fasting, and good counsel, we begin to make some risky decisions for God's Kingdom, that is what builds your faith!

BTW that's how the HS works, lots of Bible, prayer, and counsel, if you are not employing the Christian Disciplines and Christian Relationships then you are not hearing the HS that is just your will and ego.

Alright so all of that is needed as we said in our **MP: The Care of Christian Friendship is needed in life to help fulfill the Cost of Discipleship to glorify God. Now comes the reality of what Paul must do.**

**2. The Cost of Christian Discipleship**





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As we said in the beginning, to live rightly Paul is having to straddle the fence. He is convinced already of what he has to do, but he also needs the care of Christians around him so he can get his job done. The hard part though he has had to patiently listen to their arguments about why he shouldn't do it. He's had to listen to their pleas and tell them no, he's had to see their tears and offer no consolation, he's had to hear their groans and refrain from comfort. He has to leave them, leave the comfort of their care so he can embrace the Cost of being called to his path of discipleship. Listen to what it has done to him.

**<sup>13</sup> 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.**”**

**LP**

**You love people, but you love Jesus more.**

Paul is like, you are breaking my heart! It tears me up to have you go through this, to see how this affects you, to know what I am leaving behind, BUT I am ready. I am ready to be imprisoned, I am even ready to die all for the name of the Lord Jesus.

It reminds me of the last night before the Lord's arrest and execution. Do you remember it? He had been telling them He must leave, He had been telling them He must die, He had been telling them Jerusalem was His end. His disciples would not accept that it was His end so what did He do? He gathered His disciples in an upper room, He washed their feet, He fed them a last supper to remember Him after He was gone, He prayed a High priestly prayer that God would protect them, He let them accompany Him to the garden, BUT He would not let them come in the way of His cause, **because He loved the Father more**. You see it is an honor and privilege to give of your life for Christ if He calls for it, because calling for it means you get to show people **who you love more**. There may come a time where you need to leave the comfort of those that care about you, but the Cost of Discipleship is worth it if we get to make much of Him.



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**LP**

**You value input but you value God’s will more.**

<sup>14</sup> And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, “Let the will of the Lord be done.” <sup>15</sup> After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem.

Luke tells us ‘we’ couldn’t persuade him, did you see who was in on Agabus’ and Phillip’s side, Luke was, his best friend. And through Paul’s consistency to loving Jesus more, while loving his friends his maturity won them over and they all conceded this was the will of the Lord. In other words, by both parties acting correctly, by Christians caring for Paul and by Paul caring more about Christ, they all came to the same conclusion, to Jerusalem you must go. Then I can only imagine those few days they had left a lot of prayer and support for Paul must have been poured out and Luke and He went on to Jerusalem.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

Now we see Paul is resolute, he is receiving the support needed as he is now just miles away from destiny, and he has been strengthened in the faith. Now not only does Christ know of his destiny, but all his friends do too. Out of grace the Lord Jesus has allowed Paul friends and company who understood the Cost of Discipleship. **While he may be called to suffer for Christ, he will not feel the loneliness that our Lord felt.**

You see Christian Care is a GIFT of God meant to help us with our call to endure the Cost of Discipleship.

Christian Care is a part of our inheritance for God adopted you into a family that knows how to care for its’ own.

Christian Care is an extension of Christ and how he extends affection to His people so we too as the Disciples on their most alone night could feel the warmth of Christ.



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It is through Christian Care that we endure our call to bear our Cross for Christ, and it is by Christian Care that we make sure our brothers and sisters can finish their course and keep the faith.

**[CHALLENGE]**

Today out of Grace the Lord has given us all some pretty good friends, hasn't He? HCC, I believe we are on the path here to build some wonderful and caring relationships that will be necessary for the future but let us endeavor to improve where we can.

Today, maybe you need to commit to extending hospitality to others in your home, make the time, do the work, and let others know you are there for them.

Today commit to showing spiritual affection, walk the extra mile with each other, take the time to hear the heart of your family, support one another publicly whether in person or on social media, be a part of each other's life.

Today, commit to letting others know your problems and be open to having dialogue about the hard things in life. Don't be afraid to hear where you might be wrong and please family don't be afraid to tell your family the truth for they need it and deserve from you.

Today love Jesus more than the comfort you receive from family in this room. Embrace your calling for Christ, challenge yourself where you have gotten comfortable in living, commit to loving Jesus as He has eternally committed to you.

Today, commit to following the will of God, which is that our lives are not all about living without any trials or trouble but like Paul we have been given the opportunity to suffer for Christ in our lives, for by the Cost of Discipleship we get to show He who is worthy of all praise.

May we all come to understand that:



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**MP:**

**The Care of Christian Friendship is needed in life to help fulfill the  
Cost of Discipleship to glorify God.**

May you come to know the benefits of Christian living as all of those that have gone before us have.

**[PRAYER]**

**[CALL TO OBEY]**

**Elder –**

**John 13:34-35 ESV**

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Brothers and sisters let us now love one another with the care that our Lord has loved us, Amen.

**[COMMUNION]**

**PJ will go through the act of communion with the congregation.**

**[CONFESSION OF FAITH]**

\* The Congregation will stand

**Elder – “Christians, what do you believe?”**

**Congregation - recites LBCF 1689 Chapter 5 Section 1**

God, the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom, upholds, directs, determines, and governs all creatures and things, 1 undefined 2 He does this by his perfectly wise and holy providence, for the purpose for which they were created, according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and



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unchangeable counsel of his own will. All of this results in praise for the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.

**[OFFERING+LAST SONG] – EMPHASIZE PRAYER LIST!**

**[BENEDICTION]**

Go in the name of the Father, that gave us the Son that we would know and see His care for all His children.

Go in the name of the Son, that endured the ultimate cost of Loyalty to God so that we would have the blessing of many redeemed siblings.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, enabling us to Care for those that need and empowers us for the day we too get to offer all for the name of Christ.