

Acts 21-23 The Power of Absolute Surrender

This Evening we are returning to our study in the book of Acts – we are picking up the Story in Acts 21 – Paul is on his way to Jerusalem.

A) It is the **final march of his life**. He will eventually end up in Rome – where he will eventually die as a Martyr for Christ.

B) The **Striking thing** that we see in Paul in this section of scripture is despite the fact that he knows what awaits him

1) He moves and shares throughout these last chapters with **incredible confidence and Power**.

C) That is why I have entitled this message **THE POWER OF ABSOLUTE SURRENDER** -and it really is the theme of these final chapters.

D) So as we move through this final section – I want us to see the Power of Jesus being manifested in Paul 1) **because** He was absolutely surrendered to Christ and His mission.

E) We are going to cover three Chapter tonight – because this section encompasses an entire story.

1) I want us to see it in Full.

God's power at work in Paul in **4 ways!**

Starting in Ch.21 #1 Paul was living for one Purpose RD V.1-4

Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos, the following *day* to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ² And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. ³ When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo. ⁴ And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.

Note V.4 They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.

A) But didn't we read already in **Acts 20:22** – where Paul said “**And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem,**”

B) Bound = Compelled or Driven- The Holy Spirit was pushing him toward Jerusalem.

C) Paul continued – I go boundv.22b **not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.**

So is God being schizophrenic here?

A) One Chapter – Paul you are going to Jerusalem and bad stuff is waiting for you there.

B) Next Chapter God is saying through the believers – **Don't go Paul.**

1) Answer – No God is not being Schizophrenic – {That is not God – **your boss maybe** – NOT God.

C) Here is what is happening – the Holy Spirit is telling them both the same thing. –

1) Here is what the Holy spirit is saying: **Paul there is going to be problems if you go to Jerusalem.**

Now here is how the Christians **were interpreting the message** – If there is going to be problems – then that means **you need to avoid them.**

A) In other words **DON'T GO PAUL!**

B) This is a mistake that a lot of Christian make that the goal in life is to avoid hardship. –

1) Problems – **AVOID THEM.**

C) So the Christians were interpreting the warning as Paul you shouldn't Go!

D) Paul is saying Yes there is a Warning from the Spirit – **so I had better be Ready!**

1) See the difference?

Paul was able to have that attitude because remember back in Ch. 20:24 – **TURN THERE....**

Right after talking about how the HS told him he would suffer Paul said V. 24 But none of these things move me nor do I count my life dear to myself – Running the race to finish with Joy!

See that is the Power of living for One purpose that comes from Absolute surrender –

A) Paul was living for one Purpose to See Jesus glorified in and thru His life.

RD V.5-9

⁵When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed. ⁶When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.

⁷And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. ⁸On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. ⁹Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

They stop to visit with Philip – Remember Philip Acts 8 revival Samaria –

A)Go to desert of Gaza – why ? Divine Appointment – Ethiopian Eunuch

B)Baptized – God transported Philip to Caesarea – He stayed there – and became an evangelist – now he is known as Philip the evangelist.

1)Preacher of the gospel

C)Philip got married – when Paul shows up Philip has four unmarried daughters who prophesied –

1)Prophecy is to speak a Biblical word with Power and Precision.

D)Great girls – Full of the word – and anointed by God!

E)Single guy says – I want to marry a girl like that

1)You have to be that kind of guy – no attraction!

RD V.10-11

¹⁰And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

Agabus this Prophet with a rep for being accurate says Paul when you get there they are going to bind you and deliver you to the Gentiles

A)Once again the believers interpret this to mean – Paul you shouldn't go –

V.12 ¹²Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.

B)Now is Paul going to Go? – YES – WHY?

1)Because he is living a life of Absolute surrender – He knows the Power of having one purpose.

C)He is committed to that one purpose of seeing Jesus glorified –

1)even if it means through Paul's own suffering!

13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." **POWERFUL !**

14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

Because Paul was living for one purpose:

He was not persuaded by the opinions of others.

A)They were like don't go don't go – and Paul was like: I am going!

B)Now this doesn't mean that we are not influenced by the opinion of others –

1)the Bible says there is wisdom in a multitude of Counselors

C)I have had times where the counsel of others caused me to change course – re-evaluate

1)Other times re-evaluate – the Lord confirmed the course but – slowed down the speed!

D)It is important to listen to other people – seek counsel

1) but once the Lord has made it clear what His will is { We just need to follow it – regardless of others opinions.

He placed no limits on following Christ.

A)v.13 Paul said I am ready to die if that is what Jesus wants for me!

B)It is a critical crossroads in the life of every believer where we come to the place of saying:

1)I am ready to follow Christ no matter what!

C)Some people like to put restrictions on God – I will go only here – I will do this but I won't do that – 1)That is not absolute surrender.

D) My dad gave me the soundest advice ever – my freshman year of college – Baseball scholarship – Vanguard – called into ministry – when

1) **You are not going to be happy or fulfilled until you are doing what Christ has called you to do and be.**

E) **I can't tell you how many times I have come back to those words when faced with a tough call or decision to make.**

Paul was living for one Name! V.13 "For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

A) **What Name – JESUS – we see this echoed over and over in the book of Acts –**

RD V. 15-25

¹⁵ And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.

¹⁷ And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. ¹⁸ On the following *day* Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; ²¹ but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs. ²² What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. ²³ Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. ²⁴ Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave *their* heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. ²⁵ But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written *and* decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."

Here is another result: His absolute surrender #2 Paul was able to Endure False Accusations.

A) **Everything can be going great in our lives until opposition comes – someone says something.**

B) Worst is when someone makes false accusations about you – attacks your character or integrity

1) **That happens there is an ugliness in us that can rear it's head. – {Know what I am talking about}**

Now Paul could have responded – you guys are crazy I didn't do those things OR teach those things.

A) **In fact I did the opposite remember when I had Timothy get circumcised out of sensitivity to the Jews**

B) **I don't need to take a vow – and I am certainly not paying the expenses – who do you think I am**
1) **Paul could have protested!**

C) But he didn't/ instead he humbly went along with what they were proposing – Why?

1) **Because Paul was absolutely surrendered to Jesus**

In his heart – Paul didn't matter.

D) If it was going to help the unity – and Help with the mission Paul was all about it

1) **That is powerful – NO OTHER AGENDA BUT JESUS! –**

E) **So Paul agreed to go thru this little purification ritual with these others guys.**

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

Now when you do the right thing – what do you expect to happen? A good result RIGHT?

A) **I said I was sorry – and I was expecting them to forgive me.**

B) **But that is not always the case is it – You can do the right thing and experience a lousy result.**

1) **People get madder – respond more negatively.**

C) **Question: Who are you doing the RIGHT THING FOR? JESUS –**

1) Not someone else's response or approval – if that happens great – but – Needs to be done for Jesus

D)What was the result of Paul doing the right thing?

²⁷ Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, ²⁸ crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all *men* everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." ²⁹ (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom **they supposed** that Paul had brought into the temple.)

So They brought Three accusations against Paul

A) { They said Paul was teaching against the people, the law, and this place= temple.

B)This people: The Jews believed that they were the pathway to God –

1)the way to come to God is you have to convert to Judaism.

C)Do you need to become Jewish to be saved – No just believe in Jesus.

They said he was teaching against the Law – Do you need to follow the law to be saved. No believe in Jesus

A)Paul taught the law had a divine purpose – it was righteous – { purpose reveal we are sinners } GAL

B)Saved by believing in Jesus.

C)They said that Paul **taught against the temple** – why were they saying that?

1)What was the #1 thing happening in the temple?
SACRIFICE

D)Paul was teaching that Jesus was the final sacrifice!

30 And all the city was disturbed; Normally population of about 60k – Pentecost 500K and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.

D)We are talking one angry mob here.

RD V.31-36

³¹ Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³² He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³ Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another.

So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. ³⁵ When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. ³⁶ For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"

Result #3 Paul could testify in the face of opposition.

³⁷ Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?"

He replied, "Can you speak Greek? ³⁸ Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?"

³⁹ But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."

B)Now this is amazing to me- they all want to kill him – Paul says can I talk ...

C)I know they want to kill me – but – I have been waiting for this chance.

1)Paul is thinking – Romans will protect me

40 So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying,

Ch. 22 "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now." ² And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, **they kept all the more silent.**

B) They listened intently as Paul shared his testimony

We looked at this in Ch.9 – reiterates in v.3-21

C) Paul talks about his zeal to persecute the Church

D) But on his way to Damascus – light – knocked off his horse – hears a voice – Saul.... Persecuting me

E) Jesus of Nazareth – Talking to a Resurrected Jesus

He tells them about being led in Damascus – Blind

A) Meeting Ananais – receiving his sight back

B) And the whole time the crowd is listening intently until he gets to this part

¹⁷ “Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance ¹⁸ and saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.’ ¹⁹ So I said, ‘Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. ²⁰ And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’ ²¹ Then He said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’ ”

When Paul gets to the part where Jesus commissioned him to preach to the gentiles

A) That is when everything goes south –

B) The Jews had such hatred and disdain for the disciples.

C) So sad when bitterness in the heart of someone can make them not even listen to TRUTH

22 And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" 23 Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air,

C) Not the response that Paul was looking for- He was hoping they would all want to receive Jesus

1) INSTEAD - KILL HIM –

24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him. {Beat it out of him}

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?"

D) Remember Philippi – they beat Paul and then found out he was a Roman citizen – Paul is not making that mistake again – Tell them first -

²⁶ When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the commander, saying, “Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman.”

²⁷ Then the commander came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman?”

He said, “Yes.”

²⁸ The commander answered, “With a large sum I obtained this citizenship.”

And Paul said, “But I was born *a citizen*.”

²⁹ Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

The penalty for lying about one’s Roman citizenship was significant.

It wasn’t the kind of thing people commonly lied about, so the commander could simply ask Paul directly.

When he found out Paul was born a Roman citizen he got really nervous

A) It was against Roman law for a GOVT official to strike or bind a Roman Citizen – Fair trial

B) Like our version of Police Brutality!

C) So they left Paul alone – but protected!

³⁰ The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from *his* bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

D) So this commander is trying to figure this out

Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.”

Paul said I am not trying to cause trouble – I have lived with a good conscience before God... this day

² And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.

Ch. 23V3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, **you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?"**

I wish we knew *how* Paul said these words.

A)It would have helped to hear Paul’s tone of voice; was it an outburst of anger,

B)or was it a calm, collected rebuke with that much more weight to it?- We don’t know – wait
Movie

C)Whatever the tone, the rebuke was entirely accurate and justified.

1)The man who commanded that a defenseless man be punched in the face indeed was a whitewashed wall;

D)a white veneer of purity covering over obvious corruption.

See OT law said like our judicial system that a man was innocent until proven guilty

A)Paul’s point was you are breaking the OT law you haven’t proven anything and you are slapping me.

4 And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

5 Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"

B)Even in this Paul quickly reverts to real humility – Paul could have said –

1)He is the high priest he should know what the law says

C)Paul didn’t go there { What happens next is brilliant – RD V.6-10

⁶But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Pharisee’s believed in miracles and Rez – Sadducees didn’t – why Sad u SEE he cried out in the council, “**Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!**”

⁷And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. ⁸For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. ⁹Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees’ party arose and protested, saying, “We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.”

¹⁰Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring *him* into the barracks.

How do you think Paul felt at this moment.

A)Sitting in Jail – his opportunity to preach to a large crowd of his brethren – temple steps failed

B)Then he gets this opportunity to preach to the Sanhedrin – that doesn’t go well.

C)Think Paul was feeling like a Failure?

Maybe you have felt that way- Your attempts to serve the Lord – didn’t turn out the way you thought

A)I know I have had plenty of situations like that.

B)Lord what happened – often reminded if these words

“Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.” 1 Corinthians 4:2

C)We tend to look for results – God is looking for faithfulness! – JUST BE FAITHFUL!!!!

D)Now I don’t know for sure if Paul was feeling down – but what happens next gives a hint

Notice v. 11 “But the following night the Lord stood by Him.”

A) Paul is at one of the lowest points of his life and where is Jesus? – Right beside Paul.

B) Jesus promises us “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Hebrews 13:5

C) Just as Jesus was standing right beside Paul He is standing next to you today. – He is there.

Notice the rest of v.11 “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.”

A) Be of good cheer – or TAKE COURAGE!

B) This tells me that Jesus knew exactly what was going on in Paul’s heart –

1) He knew what He was feeling.

C) Paul was getting weak and weary in well doing.

1) Paul was feeling a bit discouraged – Jesus is there saying Paul TAKE COURAGE - I got this!

D) I love this picture { Our darkest night our toughest circumstance, our biggest trial.

1) Jesus is right there - He loves us and draws near and says TAKE COURAGE – I’VE GOT THIS!

Jesus makes this Promise to Paul – just as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you Rome!

A) We just read of Paul testifying in Jerusalem – think that was a disaster!

B) Jesus says – Paul you were faithful – you testified of me in JERUSALEM - The truth went forth

1) Paul you were faithful

QUESTION: How many were saved? ZERO

A) But note this Jesus is still glorified – He is still honored - still takes notice.

B) Paul you shared the message – You told them about me –

C) Guys this is huge { Jesus is not keeping track of how many respond – that is up to Him anyway.

1) He is keeping track of how faithful we are in sharing the message. I LOVE THAT!

D) Jesus Promises Paul – Going to Rome

That was the longing on Paul’s heart to share the gospel in ROME – Heart beat of the World at ...time

A) Guys this is so encouraging – I just love the way Jesus rushes to Paul’s side – darkest hour

B) Paul’s absolute surrender to Jesus gave Him the power to testify in the face of opposition.

#4 Paul had the Power to believe the Promise of God!

A) Because Paul was absolutely surrendered to Jesus – Paul could trust Christ Proven Character.

B) Jesus says I am going to Rome – I am going to Rome! – Testify in Rome

RD V. 12-31

¹² And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. ¹³ Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. ¹⁴ They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, “We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near.”

¹⁶ So when Paul’s sister’s son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷ Then Paul called one of the centurions to *him* and said, “Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him.” ¹⁸ So he took him and brought *him* to the commander and said, “Paul the prisoner called me to *him* and asked *me* to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you.”

¹⁹ Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside, and asked privately, “What is it that you have to tell me?”

²⁰ And he said, “The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. ²¹ But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you.”

²² So the commander let the young man depart,

and commanded *him*, “Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me.”

²³ And he called for two centurions, saying, “Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; ²⁴ and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring *him* safely to Felix the governor.”

A) Commander assembles 470 soldiers to get Paul back to Caesarea that night!

B) Letter is written explaining the situation – Paul is delivered to GOV Felix –

²⁵ He wrote a letter in the following manner:

²⁶ Claudius Lysias,
To the most excellent governor Felix:

Greetings.

²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. ²⁸ And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. ²⁹ I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains. ³⁰ And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him.

Farewell.

³¹ Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought *him* by night to Antipatris. ³² The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks. ³³ When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. ³⁴ And when the governor had read *it*, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that *he was* from Cilicia, ³⁵ he said, “I will hear you when your accusers also have come.” And he commanded him to be kept in Herod’s Praetorium.

Felix says to Paul V. 35 “I will hear you when your accusers also have come.” And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

D) That is where we are going to leave Paul until next time.

Absolute surrender to Jesus – resulted in Paul having Power to

- #1 Live for one purpose.**
- #2 Endure false accusation.**
- #3 Testify in the face of opposition**
- #4 Believe the Promise of God.**

Same Power is available to us! –

Takeaways:

#1 Doing God’s will in God’s power is not always easy

#2 Doing God’s will in God’s power doesn’t always have the result we think it will

#3 Jesus is with us in all situations

#4 Jesus is looking for faithfulness more than results and so should we.

#5 Jesus rewards faithfulness with more and greater opportunities! – Paul is going to Rome!