

Acts 21:1-14 Step Into It

Have you ever stepped in it?

A)The IT - WAS One of those situations in life where you suddenly realized you were in over your head-

B)You got more than you signed up for.

C)When I was a kid - I once stepped into and then fell into a massive Red Ant -hill - it was like a city.

1)Red Ants crawling all over me - Ran home as fast as I could tearing my clothes off as I ran - *first streaker in my neighborhood.*

D)I am sure we have all had moments where we stepped into something difficult and uncomfortable.

But sometimes we step into something that is awesome and sweet!

A)A relationship or a friendship, maybe it was a job, maybe a new neighborhood or community.

B)Many of you have told me that was your experience in coming to this church -
1)you stepped in - immediately felt right

C)Others it took some time for you to feel that way.

D)Well in Ephesians chapter 2 we read of something that God is doing in all of us and for all of us -

1)That he wants us to step into

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. Salvation is about something that God did for us and to us. Gospel -

We don't earn salvation it is a gift from God.

But notice what Paul says next

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

A)Workmanship is such a beautiful word - Poema in the Greek and it means Masterpiece

B)Now if your thinking - I know I worked really hard to look this way - he is not talking about your Physical appearance

C)He is not is talking about your anatomy although - Science confirms what the Bible said all along - we are fearfully and wonderfully made

D)Human Being - most sophisticated of God's Living creatures

But the focus here on you and I being a master piece is - not Anatomy but redemption

A)Created In Christ - You become a Christian - place in Jesus

B)God sees you IN his Son - and He sees your potential - you are a masterpiece in the making

C)Think about art for a minute - Art is usually the expression of the artist

Artist with a Dark and moody - personality - Paint Dark paintings

A)Song writers - The Blues - expression of a difficulty.

B)Song where the lyrics are about how my truck broke down, my dog died and my girl left me -
1)You know it is a Country song right

C)Any Swiftly fans in the house - don't want to admit that do you

1)A Swiftly is a Taylor Swift fan

I don't really know her music especially her new stuff - but I have read -

A)Taylor Swift has been through a lot of dating relationships -

B)So every time she breaks up with a guy she writes a song about it

1)She is expressing herself about that guy and that relationship through her music

C)Some of those songs have turned into #1 hits

My point - The artist often expresses himself / herself through their art

A)Here in Ephesians 2:10 **God is telling us that He is an artist** - He expresses himself through - Creation

B)David- **the Heavens declare the glory of God!**
God spoke the world into existence

C)God expresses himself through **Human anatomy** - Jeremiah declared **We are fearfully.. wonderfully made**

When God says - you are my masterpiece - like he is saying you are my song - my painting - my sculptor

A)I have Chosen you in my son to be a living breathing expression of who I am to the world around you.

B)By stepping into the Good works that I have prepared for you before you even knew ME!

C)Paul put it this way: Created you in Christ - brought you into my family - for a purpose -
1)created you for Good works - that you should walk in them

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

D)That you should walk in is the idea of stepping into what God has prepared for us.

Last week we talked about discovering our assignments - God has created assignments for us

A)Starts with what he has put into our hands -
Resources and relationships -

B)But it Also involves the opportunities -
1)the doors that he opens up for ministry and service to help others

C)He wants us to walk in them - or think of it this way:

God presents an opportunity and he wants us to step into it

A)Don't run from it like Jonah- but step into

B)Paul understood this: So he was always thinking about - What is my assignment -
1)why did Jesus apprehend me ?

C)With that in mind let's turn now to Acts 20

D)Paul has just completed his 3rd missionary Journey 1)and he is feeling this prompting from God's Spirit to go to Jerusalem

E)Recall Paul said in V.22 ²² And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, **this is the opportunity - this is how the Lord is leading - I need to go to Jerusalem-this is what I am stepping into -**

but I do so V.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.

The Spirit is directing me to Jerusalem and as I have been heading in that direction - everywhere I go -

A)The Holy Spirit is testifying through others that chains and tribulations await me -

B)But Paul was ready to step into that - Why?

V.24 ²⁴ But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so 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.

C)I am willing to step into what is ahead because -
My life is not my own - my life belongs to Jesus

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20

So the Holy Spirit is telling Paul - this is what I have for you -

A)And Paul is like ok - I am willing to step into that

B)In the book Romans his burden for the Jewish people was so strong –

C)Paul said he was willing to perish if it meant his brethren could be saved

D)Well Jerusalem was the epicenter of Judaism -
1) In the first century it is where the most Jewish people lived

E) Paul is like - I am burdened for my unsaved Jewish brethren I want to get to Jerusalem and share Jesus

1) Chains and Tribulation await me - but that is ok - I am ready to step into it

But then something interesting happens in Acts 21 - there is a tension that surfaces - see if you see it
Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, {leaving the Ephesian church leaders - he just wrapped up their mini retreat} running a straight course we came to Cos, {stop for the night 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.

I Love this: Remember last week we said - one of the things that marked Paul's life he gave more than he took -

A) Along the journey he is going stop in various places and when he does he looks for believers to encourage.

B) Spend 7 days with the believers in Tyre.

They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. 5 When 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. 6 When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.

Do you see the tension?

A) In Acts 20 Paul's the Holy Spirit is leading me to Jerusalem and he is letting me know - chains and tribulations await me

B) But I go bound in the Spirit - Paul saying: I feel like I don't even have a choice - it is so strong

C) But then he comes to Tyre and the believers there say through the Spirit- don't go up to Jerusalem.

1) Tense is they were saying the Holy Spirit is saying over and over again

What is happening here? Is the Holy Spirit suddenly confused?

A) Did God change his mind - is he trying to take Paul on a detour.

B) Paul doesn't think so - he presses on

C) What happens next I think gives us the answer
7 And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. 8 On 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. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. {You have four girls and they all have the gift of prophecy in the same house. {How Crazy is that? - Sabio and his brothers

Philip's daughters are prophetesses - and you know what they say.

"prophets of a feather flock together right, because watch what happens next.

10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 When 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.' "

In Caesarea - this prophet name Agabus shows up - Agabus is this dramatic dude.

A) He is not some timid guy who says - I think I got a word from the Lord for you Paul.

B) Agabus is bold and dramatic - he takes Paul's belt - more of a sash that went around his robe and Agabus says:

1) Whoever owns this belt will be bound by the Jews in Jerusalem and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.

C) Notice the reaction of the believers - hearing this: 12 Now when we {Luke} heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.

So when all the believers including Paul's traveling companions

A)Including Luke who is writing this - heard that word - from Agabus

B)They respond by pleading with Paul not to go.

C)They are interpreting the message the same way that the believers in Tyre did -

1)Paul CHANGE COURSE - You are not supposed to go to Jerusalem.

C)But Notice again what Agabus says:

“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.’ ”

CSB -This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him over to the Gentiles.

NLT “The Holy Spirit declares, ‘So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.’

Here is what is missing in every one of those translations - there is **no “IF”**

A)Agabus is not saying if the person who owns this belt - goes to Jerusalem this is what is going to happen to him

B)There is not if - Agabus is simply declaring -

1)the person who owns this belt is going to be bound **WHEN HE goes to Jerusalem**

C)But All of Paul’s friends interpreted the message to mean to be a PROHIBITION -

1)Paul you are not supposed to go - The Holy Spirit is prohibiting you from going

I think that is what was happening in Tyre -

A)The spirit was showing them - this is what awaits Paul in Rome

B)and they interpreted that to mean - Paul you are not supposed to go

C)But it wasn’t a message of PROHIBITION - it was a message of PREPERATION

1)That is how Paul is seeing it

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.”

C)Paul sees it this way: The Holy Spirit is seeking to prepare me to know what is coming -

1)and to prepare all of you to know how to pray.

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

Remember back in Acts 9 we saw when Paul was apprehended by Jesus on the road to Damascus.

A)Seeing that Jesus had risen from the Dead changed everything for Paul

Aa)Jesus captured his heart that day - He goes from being the #1 enemy of Jesus and his followers

B)To the #1 pursuer of Jesus and Witness of the Saving power of Jesus

C)But it was during that time that Jesus revealed what his Assignment in life was going to be about -

1)Why he was Apprehended

To Bring the gospel to his Jewish countrymen - Check

A)We have seen Paul do that - every city - where did he start? The Synagogue - where the Jews hung out

B)Jesus also revealed to Paul that he was going to Bring the gospel to the gentiles - **Check**

1)We have seen him do that too - starting churches all over Asia and the middle east - Full of Gentiles

C)But Jesus also revealed to Paul that he was going to Experience suffering for the name of Jesus - Check

D)We have seen that too, Paul has been beaten, stoned with rocks and left for dead -

1)He has been imprisoned - ran out of towns

But Jesus also told Paul that he was going to bring the gospel to Kings and rulers -

A)We haven’t seen that yet

B)But that is EXACTLY what was going to happen because of Paul’s imprisonment in Jerusalem

C)This is what we will see in the rest of the book of Acts.

In Chapter 22 Paul shares his testimony to the Jews

A) But in the presence of a Commander of a Roman Garrison

B) Then in Chapter 24 He gets to share before the **governor named Felix** -

C) Then in Chapter 25 before another **Governor Festus Ch.25**

1) Then before **King Agrippa** Ch.25-26

D) Eventually Paul will go to Rome and get an audience before the Emperor Nero himself

E) He spend years in a Roman prison -

1) but we are told that the gospel spread throughout the whole palace guard - How did that happen?

How? Chained to a guard - They looked at Paul as their captive

A) Paul saw them as a captive audience - they were stuck with him

B) What are they going to talk about - JESUS - guards started getting saved

C) Spreading - it is like Revival among the Palace guards of Nero

D) And we are told the gospel spread to much of the Household of Nero- how did that happen?

Well these guards would have guard duty one week - guarding Paul being exposed to Jesus

A) The following week they would be assigned to guard the emperors kids and grandkids - **secret service**

B) Conversation starts up - Last week you were with the Paul character - what was that like ?

C) Start talking about Jesus - Amazing they also start getting saved

All that happened as a result of Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem.

A) Listen The HS was giving everyone the same message - **Chains, suffering and imprisonment await you in Jerusalem**

B) The problem was the Paul's friends were interpreting it differently - than he was.

C) Paul's *well-meaning* Friends were interpreting it as a Prohibition - **the HS was prohibiting from going**

D) "If Paul goes to Jerusalem, he is going to suffer, and we will be deprived of his ministry.

1) This *cannot* be God's will."

I think this scene speaks LOUDLY to our American Christian culture that likes to think.

A) If God is in something it is not going to be hard

B) because "God wants me to be happy. If I am not happy, I am not in his will."

C) God does not want me to suffer pain. If I am in pain. Therefore I am not in God's will.

D) The Bible never says that - in Fact Jesus promised - ³³ *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* John 16:33

Oswald Chambers expresses what should be our mindset perfectly:

A) To choose to suffer means that there is something wrong with us; Jesus doesn't call us to be masochist

"To choose to suffer means that there is something wrong with us;" but to choose God's will even if it means suffering is a very different thing. No healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not."

Listen our interpretation to what God is doing especially in the HARD TIMES the times of suffering is of key importance!

A) Sometimes we go through a trial or a difficulty and this is how we interpret it

B) God has abandoned me - God doesn't love me - that is the wrong interpretation

C) Now listen: Sometimes we experience difficulty and trials as the result of our own stupidity/ rebellion

1) We reap what we sow - suffering the consequences for poor decisions

D) But even in that the Lord hasn't abandoned us

E) The trial might be his way of trying to get our attention -

Like Jonah being swallowed by the big fish

A) That was a consequence of his rebellion - and because God loved him and had not abandoned him

B) God went to extreme lengths to get Jonah attention 1) you are going to spend 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of a big fish

C) Listen if you have walked away from Jesus been running from Jesus

1) and find yourself in a Jam today - it might be God is trying to get your attention to bring you back

But sometimes we go through difficulties because we are living in a fallen world and struggles are a part of it

A) Jesus said in this world you will have tribulation - **not you might** -

B) Trials and tribulation is part of being human.

C) Some of you are in the midst of a heavy trial right now -

1) the devil has been whispering in your ear these lies - God doesn't love you -

D) If he loved you none of this would be happening to you

E) You have been tempted to bail on your faith - or bail on your marriage

1) or just check out for a season - spiritually

YOU ARE INTERPRETING THE TRIAL THE WRONG WAY

A) The very thing that you are going through right now -

B) Or that some of you are going to go into next week - next month

1) Is what God is going to use to PREPARE you for something great

C) The opposition you are experiencing right now is so strong and so intense -

1) because God is going to do something wonderful

D) So step into it -

1) Trusting that God is moving and working and using this difficulty to make you more like Jesus

The apostle Peter wrote these words to believers in Jesus who were going through intense persecution in the first century from Rome

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:7

Trials bring out the genuineness of our faith - God in the fire - Jesus Reflection

James reminded us of a similar thing.

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:2-3

You are His Workmanship

A) His poem - His masterpiece in the making

B) Jesus is working in your life - to transform you - He has an assignment for you right now

C) This stage - this season - this trial

The Question is will you STEP INTO IT?

A) Or are you going to sit pat -

B) Are you going to believe the lie - and Run?

C) Step into it - let him carry you into the midst of the difficulty

D) Carry you into the STORM

E) Carry you into your assignment -

He is preparing you for something great.