

## Paul's Vision for the future.

Acts 19:21-22.

Sunday morning, July 31, 2011.

### I. The nature of Paul's vision.

#### A. Paul purposed in the Spirit.

1. This means that this purpose of Paul was not born out of selfish ambition.
2. It also means that it was characterized by a heartfelt submission to the will of God.
3. It furthermore means that this purpose stood open to being re-directed by God; After all, we know in part and see in part.  
See on this Acts 20:23; 21:4 and 21:10-14.  
Here, through the gift of prophecy, the NT prophets rightfully foretell that Paul will be arrested, bound, and delivered over to the Gentiles in Jerusalem.  
From this information, Luke and Paul's other travel companions, as well as the leadership of the various churches Paul visited on his way to Jerusalem, wrongfully concluded that therefore Paul was not to go up to Jerusalem.

#### Application:

1. There is in this a word of caution with regards to those who would say regarding certain matters that the Holy Spirit told them this, that, or the other thing. Even if that is your conviction regarding a matter, be especially careful not to impose your "vision" on the consciences of others. It is far better to let the Lord confirm your vision by working similar sentiments and perspectives in the hearts of your brothers and sisters around you. At best, and even with the help of the Holy Spirit, we still see in part and know in part as these passages illustrate.
2. What drives your vision for the future; your hopes and dreams? Are they characterized by a humble submission to the will of God? Are they characterized by a humble desire to be useful to the Lord's kingdom?

#### B. The scope of Paul's vision.

1. The first phase of it would be a re-visiting of the churches of Macedonia. That would have included the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. Remember what Paul is doing. This is his third missionary journey. He had started out once again from Antioch in Syria; he had gone through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, visiting the churches of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. From there he had gone to Ephesus to fulfill his promise to come back to them, which he had promised to them at the end of his second missionary journey.  
Now he desires to complete the third missionary journey by re-visiting the churches founded on his second missionary journey.
2. From Macedonia he intends to travel South to Achaia; here was the church of the Corinthians.
3. From there Paul intended to return to Jerusalem, thus completing his third missionary journey.
4. Looking beyond Jerusalem Paul's burden and desire is to see Rome also, to

impart some spiritual gift to them also, and to be refreshed by their mutual faith. Romans 1:11,12.

5. Acting on this vision Paul sends Timothy and Erastus ahead of himself into Macedonia and Achaia. No doubt this was done to prepare the way for Paul's visit; setting up meetings, and putting together some kind of itinerary including provisions for meals and lodging. This way the most could be made of the time spent with each church. To the best of our knowledge, (we do not know what Paul did between his two imprisonments in Rome,) this would be the last time each of these churches would see the Apostle Paul, adding all the more weight to his visit.

#### Application:

The remarkable thing of this long range vision of the Apostle is that it came about, broadly speaking, as Paul had "purposed in the Spirit." Perhaps Paul had not envisioned going to Rome as a prisoner. The Holy Spirit would reveal those details by way of the NT Prophets in the churches Paul would visit on the way to Jerusalem. From this we should learn something. As you contemplate the question how you will serve the Lord between right now and the time the Lord calls you home to be with Himself, do not despise or belittle your long range vision. Joseph had a dream that one day he would rule over God's people, and he did, but he never could have imagined the path the Lord would take him to bring him to that place. Moses understood as a young man that God would deliver His people, and that he was the instrument to be used to that end. He was, yet his vision suffered a number of D-tours. The Lord's disciples had visions of ruling with the Lord in His kingdom, and they did, yet not in the way they had first envisioned. The lesson in all of this is that we ought not to give up on our vision too easily; yet we should cultivate flexibility and patience to have the Lord alter our vision, and for Him to fulfill it in His own way and time.

### III. The timing of Paul's vision.

- A. Note the words "When these things were accomplished..." These words give us the timing of Paul's vision; but what things were accomplished?
- B. It was when many of the Ephesian Christians; those who had already believed, came together, confessing their deeds. They had believed on the Lord, but in many ways they continued to follow their selfish desires. Now they came to part with all of that; they came to make a full surrender to the Lord, desiring to walk with Him and serve only Him.
- C. As evidence, they brought their books of Jewish superstitions and magical arts, and burned them. Thus the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

#### Application.

With the grace of sanctification in place Paul could safely move on to other places. Sanctification forms Christ in us. It cleanses the channel rendering it useful to the Lord. It may dawn on us gradually or suddenly. It is always a matter of all or nothing. It resolves all evils, and the "evils" it leaves in place are made to serve a constructive purpose. It is a being set apart in union with Christ to care for His sheep. Is this the single desire of your heart?