

# NED MEN'S MINISTRY

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*"As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea."*

Three conversations had to take place for me to share this.

First is a conversation with one of my sons. He shared with me that he was reading a mathematics epistle. I remarked that the "epistle" wording caught my attention and he said that it is an epistle is not just a religious or moral work, but, also a letter to an audience rather than an individual. In mathematics, it is often a teaching on how we came to the information that we now accept as axioms (accepted standards or answers).

Second, I've been drawn for some years now to Paul's Prison Epistles (Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians). They are – to me, his finest letters written in what was possibly his darkest time. Typically, I'll read one or two of them a year, usually over a couple days.

This year, I've included Acts 21-28 in that reading so that I include a bit more of Paul's journey from missionary to future-martyr. There are so many little clues that Luke (intentionally?) embedded within the text that you can see lead to Paul's temperament and theology in the Prison Epistles.

Third, I was messaging with a good friend recently and they expressed to me that they had just been effectively laid off from their position. My heart was crushed for them. They had been working so hard like so many recent college grads to get a good position within their field.

Then, God brought Acts 22:10 back to my mind: "...a prophet named Agabus came..."

Paul was in the process of wrapping up his third missionary journey and bringing a long-awaited offering to Jerusalem. And, while it had been difficult, it was rewarding and he could possibly see the tremendous growth in the Gentile church that was figuratively just around the corner.

We know that he had plans for further journeys, possibly even to Spain. Both his life and mission field lay wide open before him. Then, in a non-descript moment, a man walks up and changes everything.

*"And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, 'This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" (Acts 21:11)*

His friends, like me for my friend, were crushed for him. They even did what they could to try to persuade him from even going – "Hide on the mission-field, lay low." (super-paraphrasing here!)

In unforeseen and fragile moments, everything can change. As stated, Paul in one verse transitions from celebrated missionary to future martyr. While it would be easy to hide in the past, lay low and hope that this too shall pass, Paul moved forward with full confidence in Christ.

For me, though I would never send someone to be a martyr, that change produced such a "next-step" maturing in Paul's theology that his letters truly become epistles to believers across the ages.

Maybe for you and I, though we would never first run toward the death of anything we had worked so hard on, can learn through the Spirit to embrace God's sovereignty as He simply states, "It's time for this now."

Everyday has new challenges and new crosses to bear; but it also offers some of the finest and most impactful moments of our entire lives. Be attentive and present. And, when we see him coming, let's say cheerfully, "Hello, Agabus. What brings you here?"

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