

Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

17 July 2016

Topics

A.M. Bible Class:

Ed Curry

A.M. Lesson:

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P.M. Lesson:

The whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27)

Wednesday:

Covenant study

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-3494

Elders

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

***Great are the works of the Lord,
studied by all who delight in them. Psalm 111:2
Please silence your cell phones and other electronic devices.***

How faithful Christians come to different conclusions

Matt Skinner, enterthebible.org

Can we experience unified communities and faithful living when people disagree? What if that's part of how the Spirit works? What if Christians can still be unified even when holding quite different convictions about what God would have them do in a given situation? What if differences aren't a sign of spiritual sluggishness but are a means of discovering spiritual vitality?

Acts 21:1-6 deserves attention whenever we suppose that decision-making is easy for groups trying to be led by the Spirit.

As Acts 21 begins, Paul and his companions arrive in Tyre where they spend a week with the local Christians. This stopover comes near the end of Paul's final journey as a free man. He is returning to Jerusalem according to the plan he announced in Acts 19:21, where we learned: "Paul resolved in the Spirit to go through Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go on to Jerusalem. He said, 'After I have gone there, I must also see Rome.'"

As Paul travels from Ephesus to Tyre in

Acts 20, he does so with confidence in the Spirit's guidance, even as he knows the journey will end with incarceration and his eventual execution. He goes in response to clear convictions about what God's Spirit has called him to do.

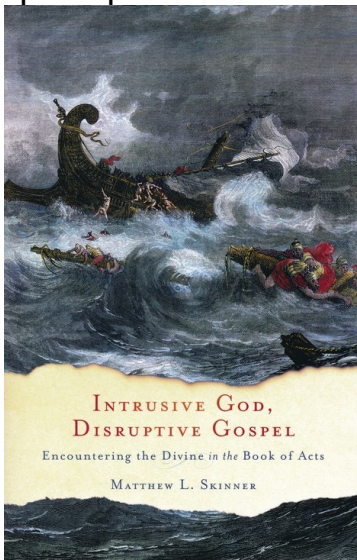
As Paul enjoys hospitality in Tyre, the Tyrians entreat him—through the Spirit—not to continue to Jerusalem. Those three words *through the Spirit* (21:4) stand out. They suggest more than just heartfelt sincerity. Somehow, the Holy Spirit figures in the Tyrians' appeal.

Nothing in the passage suggests the disciples in Tyre misinterpret the Spirit or attempt to deceive Paul. Acts would surely denounce them if they did.

The Tyrians understand the Holy Spirit as desiring a certain course of action for Paul—to avoid Jerusalem. He and they have interpreted the Spirit's will in contradictory ways. No wonder Paul stays for seven days. We can only imagine the lively conversations they share and the stress they experience.

If the two opposing convictions both originate from the Spirit's influence, or from honest attempts to discern that influence, isn't this a recipe for disaster? If the Spirit works like

this, how can God possibly be known? Can a community of divided opinions manifest the Spirit's power?



The rest of the scene offers answers in the outcome of the disagreement. In Acts 21:5-6, we read about Paul and his traveling party: "When our days there were ended, we left and proceeded on our journey; and all of them, with wives and children, escorted us outside the city. There

we knelt down on the beach and prayed and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home."

On the beach we see a community of Christians staying in communion, even as they disagree over how to respond faithfully to the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit might disrupt the prospects for Christians finding comfort in total unanimity of opinion, but this does not mean God is uninterested in preserving unity. This unity is dramatically enacted when Paul and the believers of Tyre—all the men, women, and children—pray together on the beach. It's a good thing the youngsters were brought along, so they could learn what unity looks like.

Paul departs, choosing to follow the Spirit's leading, as he has discerned it. The church of Tyre sends him and his companions on their way, even though Paul does not heed their appeal. No schism. No threats. No denunciations. All of them pray to the same God, then the two groups return to their respective business, each seeking to be faithful to what they believe God has called them to do.

Disagreements prompt us to discern together where God might initiate new directions for our efforts. They create opportunities for us to turn to God and collectively reexamine our

perceptions. The book of Acts acknowledges the struggles that can figure in these corporate efforts.

This passage cautions us against overplaying any assumptions we may have about God as predictable or easy to figure out. Keeping pace with God's Spirit and engaging tough choices require us to seek God together and then, finally, to move forward with clear commitments to one another, even if moving forward means we occasionally head in different directions.

This article is adapted from a chapter in a book the author has written on Acts, *Intrusive God, Disruptive Gospel*, published by Brazos Press.

News:

Greg Briggs, along with grandkids Kyle and Kaelynn have headed to Seattle, WA. They plan to return on Saturday with another grandkid, Cameron.

Robin and Tamara Richards are on vacation for two weeks.

George Appleton, Sam and Rita's son from Texas, has been diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia. Pray the cancer can be effectively treated.

Tatyana Knowlton will be heading to Ukraine.

Prayer list:

Christian Children's Home in Portales, New Mexico

Dan Keele—mission work

Robin Richards—back pain

Sam Appleton—declining health

John Cunningham—cancer

Norma Robinson—health

Linda Boling—health

H.L. Boling—general health and complications from leukemia

Tatyana Knowlton—macular degeneration

Nic and Ani Self—health and personal needs

