CHAPTER 30
Paul’s Last Days
(Connecting our story with Christ’s)

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, “I will build my church.” What does that mean? The answer is outlined in Acts 21.

THE STORY

I. DISCIPLES
ACTS 21:4a

Christians do not inhabit separate cities or follow some outlandish way of life. And yet there is something extraordinary about them. They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the flesh. They are attacked and persecuted, but a blessing is their answer to abuse. They live in poverty, but enrich many. The Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body. As the soul is present in every part of the body, yet distinct from it, so Christians are found in all the cities of the world, but cannot be identified with the world. – Diognetus

THE STORY

Jesus is seeking to build a community of people the Bible calls disciples. The one thing that characterizes them is their willingness to follow him in order to be like him.

THE STORY

II. DEPENDENCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT
ACTS 21:4b

THE STORY
If the Holy Spirit were removed, what difference would it make?

“He will teach you all things” (Jn. 14:26)
“He will testify about me” (Jn. 15:26)
“He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment” (Jn. 16:7-11)

When Jesus builds a church, his mortar is the Holy Spirit. And there will be . . .

- spiritual knowledge
- devotion to Christ
- effective and powerful witness

III. INVOLVEMENT IN MEANINGFUL FAMILY LIFE

ACTS 21:5a

ILLUS.: Several years ago, Steven Spielberg introduced us to the modern suburban family.

- a broken home
- children practicing lewd behavior and using vulgar language
- ineffective, practically invisible adults and teachers
- incredible material prosperity

That is one side of reality. But there is another.
The third mark of the church Christ builds – men and women together, under God, personally growing toward spiritual maturity, and bringing their children with them.

IV. PRAYER

ACTS 21:5b
A study of prayer revealed that the “prayed for” group was
• 5 times less likely to require antibiotics
• 2½ times less likely to suffer congestive heart failure
• less likely to suffer cardiac arrest

THE STORY

The church Christ builds is the “not alone church.” Its people pray, not just because they want something but because they know they have a God who loves and cares.

THE STORY

V. EXERCISING DIFFERING GIFTS AND DIVERGENT ROLES
ACTS 21:8-11

THE STORY

“For the church to reach its full promise, God’s people must receive ministry from each other as genuine. It cannot be seen as secondary or second rate simply because the pastor is not present.”

THE STORY

Summary: Here’s another important result that marks Christ’s church – exercising and affirming gifts that differ.

VI. SHOWING GENUINE CONCERN
ACTS 21:10-12

THE STORY
"Pleased" is a nurse's word – showing care and concern, whatever form it may take. Caring is the sixth mark of the church that Christ builds.

**THE STORY**

**VII. A WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER AND SACRIFICE, JOYFULLY**

**ACTS 21:13**

Paul was not only willing but glad to suffer for the sake of Christ. “This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose we recognize as a mighty one, the being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clad of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making us happy” – George Bernard Shaw

**THE STORY**

**VIII. SUBMITTING TO GOD’S WILL**

**ACTS 21:14**

Whatever their varied lives and patterns, Christians, like a plant that bends and twists itself to receive the sun, follow the course of God, always turning to the light that is the source of life – Robert Wilken

**THE STORY**

**CONCLUSION:**

Are you looking for a life that counts? Here’s how the Bible says you should invest it . . .

- Be and make disciples
- Dependent on the Holy Spirit
- Involved in meaningful families
- And prayer
- Exercising gifts that differ
- Showing genuine concern
- Along with a willingness to suffer and sacrifice joyfully
- All in submission to God’s will

**THE STORY**