

Katamares: Acts: 21:8-14.

21:9 *Four Unmarried Daughters, Who Prophesied*

21:11 *Binding the Man Who Owns This Girdle*

Being Girded for Action.

Chrysostom: But why did [Agabus] use a belt with his cloak? This was the custom among people of ancient times, before men went on to dress in this soft and loose fashion. For instance, Peter ⁴ appears to have been so “belted,” and Paul as well, for he says, “the man who owns this belt.” And Elijah ⁵ too was dressed thus, and every one of the saints, since they were always in action, either traveling or working earnestly for some other necessity. But this was not the only reason: they did this also to trample on all display and observe every austerity. Indeed this is what Christ called the greatest praise of virtue, when he said, “What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces.” ⁶ Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew 10.4.7

Paul the Imitator of Christ.

Origen: “When he was about to go up to Jerusalem, Jesus took the twelve aside and spoke to them on the road, ‘Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall sentence him to death, and they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and beaten and crucified, and on the third day he shall rise.’” ¹³ Paul both contemplated Christ, in the face of manifest dangers, proceeding and eagerly going up to Jerusalem with the foreknowledge that he would be handed over to the chief priests and scribes and sentenced to death, and he exhorted us to imitate him as he imitated Christ, as he says, “Be imitators of me as I am of Christ.” ¹⁴ And he did something similar to what Christ did when he took his disciples aside. For Agabus, taking his belt and girding himself about the hands and feet, said, “These things the Holy Spirit says: they will bind in this way the man who owns this belt” when he goes off to Jerusalem. When Paul learned of this, in imitation of his teacher, he went up eagerly to Jerusalem. Commentary on Matthew 16.1.15

21:13 Weeping and Breaking My Heart

No Room for Natural Affection.

Jerome: The battering ram of natural affection, which so often shatters faith, must recoil powerless from the wall of the gospel. Letter 14.3.¹⁶

Paul's Concern for His Friends.

Chrysostom: Others were crying, but [Paul] was exhorting them as he grieved for their tears. "What are you doing," he says, "crying and breaking my heart?" Nothing was dearer to him than these people. Because he saw them crying, he grieved, while he cared nothing for his own trials. "Let the Lord's will," he said, "be done." You wrong me by doing this, so stop making me grieve. They stopped when he said, "You're breaking my heart." "I weep for you," he says, "not for my sufferings, on behalf of which I am even willing to die." They said, "Don't go into the theatre," and he did not. Again and again they drew him away and he obeyed. He fled through the window, but now, ¹⁷ though myriads, so to speak, exhort him, and those in Tyre and Caesarea weep and foretell countless trials, he does not allow it. And yet they were foretelling terrible things for him, and, what is more, through the Holy Spirit. They were not holding him back through the Spirit, and they were not simply announcing terrible events to come his way. No, they were afraid for him because he had to go up to Jerusalem. Since they could not convince him not to go, they cried, and then they settled down. You see the love of wisdom, you see the affection. "The Lord," he says, "will do what is pleasing in his sight." ¹⁸ They realized it was God's will. Otherwise Paul, who was constantly having to snatch himself from dangers, would not have been so eager. Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 21.13–14.¹⁹

Paul's Weakness.

Chrysostom: Tell me, what do you think about that adamant will of Paul? Could weeping break it? "Yes," he says, "for I can hold out against anything except for love, since it is love that has overcome and rules me." In this he is like God, whom an abyss of waters would not break but teardrops could. Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 21.13–14.²⁰

Paul's Courage.

Didymus the Blind: To this sort of opposition, respond as follows: "Why are you trying to keep me from the way I have set out on by weeping at the mention of the chains and afflictions that await me when I arrive in Jerusalem? Let it be known that I will follow the Spirit that has made known to me what awaits

me and that I am setting out on the road to the city. I do not go ignorant of what will happen there, for I have foreseen it, and I am not being checked from going. 21 So do not break my heart with your tears.” Whoever has been nobly prepared to be courageous enough to have no thought for his own life does not succumb to fear even if someone tries to provoke it. Now among them such dread had come to grip their thinking, and so the apostle said that his heart was being broken. He was not saying that he was weak but that he had come to such a state because of their bitter weeping. One could also say that just as little sins, in their actual commission, seem great to a holy person, so do the initial movements toward them, and so here he says the breaking of his heart is great. Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 21.13–14.22