

***When the Will of God is Dangerous - Acts 21:1-26***  
**Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

**Notes from the Sermon**

We are jumping back into the fabulous New Testament book of Acts. So as we jump back in let me encourage you to visit the Genesis Blog and find the study guide we published for this sermon series (there is a link at the bottom of the post for this week's Family Worship). Acts is the amazing story of how the Holy Spirit birthed the church and caused the spread of the Gospel all over the Roman Empire. The outline of Acts is found in Acts 1:8, and involves the witness of Christ and spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The second half of the book focuses on the final stage and has as its focus the mission and ministry of the Apostle Paul and his three great missionary journeys. Paul has visited most of the major cities in Asia (modern day Turkey) and Greece, preaching Jesus and planting churches in every city. As a result, Christianity is spreading like wildfire in these regions, but at every point Paul has suffered persecution. His primary instigators have been Jews who despise his message of grace, believing that it is a disgrace to have relationships with Gentiles, and proclaiming that they must be circumcised and become Jews to be saved by Jesus.

Now, at the end of the third globe trotting journey, Paul desires to visit Rome, but first he has been compelled by the Holy Spirit to visit Jerusalem, the home of his ancestors. In fact, it is his desire to arrive by Pentecost, 59 AD (see Acts 19:21 and 20:16). The reason for this journey is to deliver an offering that had been collected by the churches in Asia and Greece for their Jewish brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. The region had suffered a famine, and on top of this, Christians in Israel were being marginalized and pushed out of society. So the people who were part of the mother church were hungry, hurting, and in need of hope. Meanwhile, the Gentile churches have been generous, desiring to bless these people who are fellow believers, although they do not know them. So Paul assembled a traveling team, primarily Gentile men, who were on this trip carrying the funds on their way to Jerusalem. Yet, there becomes a growing concern for the trip. It begins with Paul himself who predicts that persecution and imprisonment awaits him in Jerusalem. Add to this the church in Tyre (21:4) and a crazy prophet named Agabus who both predicted suffering and imprisonment for Paul if he went to Jerusalem. So shouldn't Paul have bailed on the trip to avoid these prophecies? He could have just sent the funds with a few of the people and headed to Rome. Or he could have called James (the half-brother of Jesus who was leading the church in Jerusalem) and had a few Jewish Christians meet them somewhere else to hand off the money? With the Spirit spoken information Paul had, and the tearful warning, this seemed to be a better path. Yet, the Spirit had spoken to Paul with incredible clarity. He was to travel with this band of brothers, taking the offering with them, and he was to go to Jerusalem.

What we have in this story is a beautiful reminder that following the will of God is not a guarantee of a life of ease and comfort. Walking in the steps of Jesus and pursuing the will of God is often dangerous and always difficult. Lets be honest, we often gauge the will of God through the lense of what will keep us safe, prosperous, and happy. We can believe that the will of God is actually the path of least resistance. Yet, this way of seeing life in the will of God did not come from the lips of Jesus. In fact, Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." The way to know the will of God and walk in the path of Jesus is to deny self, die to self, follow Jesus no matter the cost, and do it every day. It is a daily resetting of my center so that the glory and purpose of Jesus is central, and even if it costs me suffering and persecution my answer is "yes".

In story form, Luke (author of Acts) masterfully shows us what this looks like as Paul is resolved to visit Jerusalem. You see, Acts is part of a two part work that includes Luke's Gospel. In his Gospel, Luke gives considerable attention to Jesus' final journey. We are told in Luke 9:51 that Jesus set his sights to go to Jerusalem. The purpose of this journey was sure, this would be the journey that ended with Him on the cross for us. Yet, His resolve to accomplish God's will and purpose was sure. Three times Jesus predicted the outcome of the journey to his Disciples, and three times they tried to talk him out of it. But the entire book of Acts and our redemption never happens apart from this journey. Now Luke shows us Paul, resolved to go to Jerusalem, knowing full well that the same type of fate may be waiting him. Yet the Spirit has said, "Go!" So Paul does not waver, does not pause, does not shrink back at all. Each morning Paul sets his agenda to deny self, die, and follow Jesus, right into Jerusalem. He does this knowing that there is no better place to be than in the will of God, on the road that leads to Jesus.

**Bible Reading for the Week**

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Proverbs 8	Proverbs 9	Proverbs 10	Proverbs 11	Proverbs 12	Proverbs 13	Proverbs 14

Reading from this past week: Acts 21:1-26

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 21:27-22:22

**Family Worship**

Song - *Known and Loved*

<https://youtu.be/cAyqqTuQ4CU>

Gospel Project

Unit: The People Return

Story: Zechariah Gave Hope

Big Picture Question: Can God be trusted?

Answer: Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.

Scripture: Zechariah 13-14

New City Catechism

Question #2: What is God?

Answer: God is the creator of everyone and everything.

Verse: Psalm 86:8-10, 15

Scripture

Acts 21:1-26

- If you were Paul, how do you think you would have responded to the warnings not to go to Jerusalem? Why did Paul keep going?
- Can we know God's will? How do we go about hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit like the people in this passage heard Him speak?
- Why would Paul be willing to go to Jerusalem even though he now knew what awaited him there? What does this teach us about how we know and do the will of God?

Prayer

\*Pray for victims of abuse and that the church would be a safe place for children and those whose lives have been harmed.

\*Pray that God would help you seek, know, and follow His will.