The Book of Acts Lesson 37

Acts 21:1-16

“Paul Is This a Wish, Defiance, Or a Sentence?”

\*There is some discussion among Bible Interpreters concerning this passage. There are several instances where Paul is apparently “warned” about the impending doom that awaits for him in Jerusalem. This leaves us with an apparent contradiction between what the Spirit said to Paul in Acts 20:22 “*And now, behold, I go bond in the spirit unto Jerusalem…”* and what the Spirit seems to indicate in Acts 21:4 “*And finding the disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem*.” In Acts 21:12-13 I think we see that the disciples urged Paul because they were afraid of the consequences. One thing is unquestionable, God made it very clear that Paul was walking into very serious consequences for going to Jerusalem. I believe that Paul’s unwillingness to be persuaded (Acts 21:14) is a result of his commitment to following God’s will no matter what the consequences were. This is further evidenced by the end of Acts 21:14, where the disciples conceded that the Will of God is more important than keeping their friend. This is further supported by the fact that there are no verses that would indicate that Paul was outside the will of God.

# God wants His children to know His will.

1. Finding the will of God is not always easy.
2. Following God requires faith.
   1. This means that our desire to plan and calculate will tend to lead us away from what God wants for us.
   2. Faith does not always make sense and can be scary.
3. Satan will continually cause you to question your choices.
   1. When you have too much month at the end of your money he will tell you to quit giving to church.
   2. If illness or tragedy befall you he will try to get you to think you are better off not following God.
   3. “Satan has many tools, but a lie is the handle that fits them all”. His doubts are based on lies and fear of the unknown.
      1. Abram left Ur of the Chaldees without knowing where he was going.
      2. Caleb and Joshua were willing to go in to fight the giants.
      3. These were not exactly people with everything figured out, they just wanted to follow God.
4. Sometimes well-meaning Christians can confuse the issue.
5. Loving parents can discourage their children from giving their life to God because of what it might cost them:
   1. Bible College is a waste of time.
   2. School activities are more important than church.
   3. Missionaries are always suffering and live in mud huts.
   4. Etc.
6. Friends can keep us from taking a step forward because of what it will cost them.
7. God has given lane lines and rumble strips.
8. God wants His children to follow Him.
   1. God is not the author of confusion. 1Cor. 14:33
   2. “*…if thou seek whom, he will be found of thee”* 1Chronicles 28:9 (2Chr. 15:2)
   3. He longs for a relationship with each of us more than we know.
9. If you are struggling with finding what God wants for you remember that He is the perfect guide.
   1. His Word is truth and is a primary source for guidance in the lives of Christians.
      1. Preaching
      2. Personal Bible Study
   2. His Holy Spirit is the comforter who Christ promised would guide us into all truth. John 16:13
   3. Prayer is the place where God speaks to us and directs us.
   4. Other Godly Christians can be a source of wise counsel. Proverbs 11:14

Transition: This may seem very simple, but the truth is that many of God’s people keep from taking a step of faith. They are aware that God’s will is better for them than anything they can imagine, yet cannot bring themselves to follow it. Why? Why do so many among us live less of a life than God intends for us?

# The requisite to enjoying the blessings of God’s will is that we have to be willing to go forward no matter what the consequences.

* + - * 1. Paul faced what seems like a confusing decision.
      1. Was he supposed to go to Jerusalem?
      2. Was he being warned not to go?
         1. He set aside what everybody seemed to be compelling him to do with what God himself had showed him personally.

1. In 1Kings 13 a man of God is killed when he believes the lie of an old prophet. We should be careful when told to trust what people say above what God has made clear in His Word.
2. I do not believe that either of the men who forewarned Paul about what would occur at Jerusalem were liars, but were messengers sent to make sure Paul understood what he was getting himself in.
   1. Paul’s unshakeable faith and unwavering commitment shine through in Acts 21:13
      * + 1. The problem with many of us is that we know what God wants us to do, but have not done it yet.
3. Financially- Do you tithe and give to others generously?
4. In devotions- Do you sacrifice sleep or recreation for time in the Word and Prayer?
5. In marriage- Do you show your wife that you love her by spending time with her? / Do you show you husband unconditional respect by following his leadership?
6. In friendships- Do you think of ways that you can be a blessing to others?
7. In ministry- Do you carry tracts with you to invite others to church?

Conclusion: The walk of faith is something that requires self-sacrifice. This is what keeps many of us from experiencing victory and the joy that God has made so freely available to His children. Paul did have a tough decision to make, but as is consistent with the rest of his life, he was willing to follow God no matter what it took. Can you say the same about your commitment to God? What if God called you into the ministry? What if God called you to teach, be part of the Hospitality team, nursery, parking-lot attendant, give your neighbor a tract, be a missionary? What is God guiding you to do? God’s will is the best thing you can find in this life. If you know that God is asking you to take a step forward in your faith, to not fear what will happen to you, refuse to lose the precious opportunity that He is giving you this morning. Submit to whatever it is that the Superintendent of God’s work on earth (the Holy Spirit) is telling you to do.