

"The Third Missionary Journey"

Part 16

Acts 18:23-21:26

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we were with Paul and his company in Caesarea. It was there that they stayed with Philip the evangelist for many days. While they were there a prophet from Judea showed up with a prophecy concerning Paul's journey to Jerusalem.

➤ **On to Jerusalem**

Notice Acts 21:10-11

The prophet was Agabus and this was not the first time we met him.

Acts 11:28

²⁸ And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Here Agabus foretold of the famine that would come upon the world. The famine did happen as he said and therefore Agabus proved to be a true prophet. Now in Acts 21 he foretells what is going to happen when Paul gets to Jerusalem. Since Agabus proved to be correct about the famine, these people could be sure he was accurate concerning the prophecy about Paul.

Application:

Why did this prophet come to Caesarea with this message concerning Paul? Paul already knew that afflictions awaited him and those with him had heard the concerns of others for Paul so they too were aware. We are not told why Agabus came to give this detailed prophecy. Possibly God called Agabus to come with the prophecy to demonstrate the strength of Paul's faith so that others could see what could be accomplished when a believer trusts the Lord and walks by faith. Sometimes following the Lord means walking a

path that is very uncomfortable and even painful. Too many times, believers look for the path of least resistance. Just because a path is smooth does not mean that it is a path in the will of God. Any believer who has been used by the Lord to bring about the spread of the Gospel has gone through the furnaces of affliction. God takes us through those times for several reasons. He does it so that others can see our faith and He does it so that our faith will be refined.

1 Peter 1:6-7

⁶ *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:*

⁷ *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

Psalm 66:10-12

¹⁰ *For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.*

¹¹ *Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins.*

¹² *Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*

Deuteronomy 8:2-3

² *And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.*

³ *And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.*

Notice the words of A. B. Simpson.

"You will have no test of faith that will not fit you to be a blessing if you are obedient to the Lord. I never had a trial but when I got out of the deep river, I found some poor pilgrim on the bank that I was able to help by that very experience."

Notice Acts 21:12

Here is where we ended last week. Paul's companions begged Paul to avoid Jerusalem. Notice the words of Hughes.

"In attempting to turn Paul away from Jerusalem, his friends demonstrated that their spiritual focus was more horizontal than vertical. Their love and loyalty were commendable—they wanted to preserve Paul. But their motives, though noble, were shortsighted. These Christians were not seeing God's ultimate purposes. They were looking out for Paul's good but not God's."

Application:

I need to point out here that Paul's friends were Godly men but they gave the wrong counsel. They had allowed their personal concern for Paul to take over their reasoning so they gave the wrong advice. They were actually unknowingly trying to keep Paul from doing the will of God. Luke and the other disciples had a pure motive for not wanting Paul to go, but Paul had a higher motive--the revealed will of God that he was to go to Jerusalem and his desire to win men for Christ. I point this out because we need to understand that it is the revealed will of God that has the ultimate Authority in our lives. We can seek counsel from other believers and we should but when it comes down to making the final decision we must trust the will of God. I might add that the wrong counsel can bring about great heartache in our lives. Keep in mind our study in 1 Kings. Rehoboam took the wrong counsel and divided the kingdom. Jeroboam took the wrong counsel and set up the golden calves. The man of God took the wrong counsel and was killed by a lion.

Proverbs 11:14

¹⁴Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

Counsel is good but it must be from the right counselors and it must be in the will of God. Notice the words of Arnold.

"Paul, in this case, ignored the advice of other spiritual men because he had the inward conviction of the Holy Spirit that he was to go to Jerusalem. In finding God's directive will, God may use counselors, but ultimately God must bring the understanding of His will to the one who is seeking God's will. Counselors can clarify facts, give illustrations from their own experience or the experiences of others and warn of danger, but ultimately God must lead the person seeking God's will for his life. If, after advice, a person still feels he must do what God is telling him to do, then we must encourage and not discourage him in whatever he feels God would have him to do. It is a very serious matter to play God so as to discourage another Christian from doing the will of God."

I need to add here that if the person feels the call of God to go against counsel their choice must be supported by the Word of God. God will never lead someone contrary to His Word.

Notice Acts 21:13

Paul's companions were weeping when they heard the words of Agabus. Their weeping broke the heart of Paul. He was so given over to the Lord that if he was called to die in Jerusalem, he would be okay with that. Paul had already died in Christ so His life was the life of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Notice the illustration from the life of Stonewall Jackson.

The courage of Civil War leader Stonewall Jackson in the midst of conflict can be a lesson for the believer. Historian Mark Brimsley wrote, "A battlefield is a deadly place, even for generals; and it would be naive to suppose Jackson never felt the animal fear of all beings exposed to wounds and death. but invariably he displayed extraordinary calm under fire, a calm too deep and masterful to be mere pretense. His apparent obliviousness to danger attracted notice, and after the First Manassas battle someone asked him how he managed it. "My religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed," Jackson explained.

'God knows the time for my death. I do not concern myself about that, but to be always ready, no matter where it may overtake me.' He added pointedly, 'That is the way all men should live, and then all would be equally brave.' "

Application:

This goes back to what we have discussed many times. The more we know the Word of God the more we know God. As we come to know Him more, then the less we fear in life because we understand that all things are under His control. He is sovereign over every event in our lives. He can stop any danger from harming us if He chooses to do so. Paul understood this Truth and for that reason he could walk right into Jerusalem knowing what awaited him there. Remember what Paul wrote to Timothy?

2 Timothy 1:7

⁷ For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Notice Acts 21:14

Here in this verse Paul's companions finally surrender to the will of the Lord for Paul's life. They fell silent and requested the will of God.

Application:

No matter the circumstances we can be sure that the safest place for us to be is in the will of God for our lives.

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

We need to notice from these two verses that the will of God is known when our minds are renewed and when we are separated from this world. To live in the will of God is good, acceptable (well pleasing), and perfect. Let me show you what Jesus said concerning knowing the will of God.

John 7:17

¹⁷ If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

There is a condition in this verse for knowing the will of God. We must be willing to DO the will of God. When we are willing to do the will of God, He will open doors and reveal His will to us.

Conclusion:

Nehemiah was a man that was willing to do the will of God. Therefore, the Lord opened the doors and gave the provisions to build the wall. He also did something else.

Nehemiah 2:12

¹² And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.