

"Paul's Chains in Jerusalem"

Part 4

Acts 22

Introduction: We are currently looking at Paul's defense that he gave in Jerusalem to the Jews that were determined to end his life. When we stopped last week Paul had just finished explaining to the Jews what had happened to him on the Damascus Road. He told them of his meeting with Jesus and then he told them of the devout Jew named Ananias whom the Lord had waiting for him to encourage him in Damascus. He also shared with them concerning his salvation and his baptism. Now as we move on tonight Paul will explain to them how God revealed His will to Paul and what God's will was for him.

➤ **Finding the Will of God**

Notice Acts 22:17

After Paul conversion on the Damascus Road Paul returned to Jerusalem and he came back to Jerusalem with the intent of evangelizing the Jews as we shall see. When he came back, he went into the temple and it was there that he was in prayer and he fell into a trance. We had looked at another Apostle who was also in a trance back in Acts 10.

Acts 10:9-11

⁹ *On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:*

¹⁰ *And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,*

¹¹ *And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending upon him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:*

We read of Balaam falling into a trance in the Old Testament.

Numbers 24:12-16

¹² And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying,

¹³ If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that will I speak?

¹⁴ And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

¹⁵ And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:

¹⁶ He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:

Those who fall into a trance in the Bible are those who receive a vision from the Lord and the same is true of Paul. When Paul shares with the Jews that he came to the temple to pray he was letting them know that even as a Christian he was not against the temple as many said he was.

Notice Acts 22:18

Here was the will of God for Paul's life at this time. He was not to share the Gospel in Jerusalem because the Jews would not accept Paul's testimony.

Application:

One of the most asked questions among believers today is, "How can I know the will of God for my life?" First of all, we need to understand that the will of God was made known in a vision to Paul but God does not give these visions today. Today God reveals His will through His Word. It can come through a Bible study, a sermon, a Sunday School lesson, or just through reading the Word of God. God also uses spiritual leaders to help people to understand His will.

It is very important to note that Paul received direction in the will of God while he was in prayer and so did Peter in Acts 10. Therefore, we can understand that we need to be in prayer concerning the will of God for our lives.

1 John 5:13-15

¹³ *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

¹⁵ *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

If we ask anything according to His will, we can be assured that He hears us. So, to pray to know His will is a prayer that God will hear and answer because He wants us to know His will and walk in it. We can be sure that God desires to reveal His will to us and our responsibility is to listen and to be willing to accept His will. Before we move on, I want to show you how God revealed His will to Nehemiah.

1. His heart was burdened.

Nehemiah 1:1-4

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace,

² *That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.*

³ *And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.*

⁴ *And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,*

2. Nehemiah prayed.

Nehemiah 1:5, 8-11

⁵ And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:

⁸ Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:

⁹ But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.

¹⁰ Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

¹¹ O LORD, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

3. God opened doors.

Nehemiah 2:1-4

And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.

² Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,

³ And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

⁴ Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

4. The material was supplied.

Nehemiah 2:7-9

⁷ Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah;

⁸ And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

⁹ Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

Now let us get back to Paul.

Notice Acts 22:19-21

Paul tried to reason with the Lord. He had a burning desire to stay in Jerusalem and to share the Gospel. He thought he would be the one who could best relate to the Jews. This was a wonderful desire that Paul had but it was not the will of God. God's will for Paul was to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Application:

This is a good reminder to all of us that our ideas and desires may be very honorable but they may not be the will of God. David experienced this.

1 Chronicles 17:1-4

Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD remaineth under curtains.

² Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee.

³ And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying,

⁴ Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in:

David desired to build a temple for the Lord but it was not the will of God. The temple would get built but it would be by David's son, Solomon. This was Paul's situation as well. He really desired to proclaim the Gospel in Jerusalem but Jesus said, "NO." In Acts 26 we get more details as to what the Lord had told him.

Acts 26:16-20

¹⁶ But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

¹⁷ Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

¹⁸ To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

¹⁹ Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

²⁰ But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Conclusion:

Notice Acts 22:22

The Jews became furious when Paul mentioned that he was commissioned to go to the Gentiles.

Application:

Two lessons with which I will end.

1. Not everyone will agree with you when you walk in the will of God.
2. We are called to speak the Truth even when it is not popular.