

ACTS 40 – **Knowing & Doing God’s Will - Acts 21:1-16**

Two of my favorite **Commentators** **compare** this section of Acts 21

to **Martin Luther** going to stand
before the **RULERS** of the **Catholic Church**

& to the **SPARTANS** who went to **face** the **Persian Armies**
with **only 300** in a Narrow **Mountain Pass**

In **other words** - this is a **HUGE** - **Turning Point** Text

What **Paul** is committing **to do** here - **CHANGES EVERYTHING**

The **COURSE** of the remainder of the **Book of Acts**
is **DETERMINED** by what Paul does **HERE** - Today

It **CHANGES** the **COURSE** of the **REST** of his Life
& it **DICTATES** the **LIMITS** of his **ministry** from here on

Today - MORE than ever - Paul MUST decide;

- 1) if he really **KNOWS God’s Will**
- 2) if he’s really going to **DO God’s Will**

& we get to **JOIN HIM** in HIS Struggle -
& Let’s **PRAY**, **GOD** would **APPLY** Paul’s struggle - to **OUR** Lives

Let’s Pray

Back in Acts 19:21 - after the Pinnacle of Ministry Success
in Ephesus - We read a “seemingly” minor Vs . . .

Acts 19:21 (ESV)

21 Now after these events (in Ephesus) Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

& RIGHT HERE - A little DEBATE is born

The translations are actually About SPLIT
on whether this should be a CAPITAL “S” or LOWERCASE “s”

Meaning - is this RESOLVE from the HOLY Spirit
or just in Paul’s OWN spirit

& That SAME Question is going to come up to PAUL today

In FACT - we’ll see today - that those who CARED much about Paul
were SURE he SHOULD NOT Go to Jerusalem

But Paul was MORE Sure than ever - He was RESOLVED

His FACE was SET towards Jerusalem
Not Unlike Jesus’ face - when He made a similar trip

Paul KNEW - this trip to Jerusalem was God’s Will,
No Matter WHAT would come of him personally

But today he finds himself DEBATING with those closest to him
About whether this was INDEED God’s Will - - Or His OWN

Can WE put ourselves in **that place**?

Have we **EVER** Felt **SO SURE**

That we **KNEW** what **God** was calling us **to DO**

& it was **hard enough** just **Wrestling** with **God** about it

But **then** we also **have other people** (with good intentions)

who are **making** an already **HARD** decision almost **Impossible** !

THAT'S where we **find Paul** today

Last week - At the **end** of that incredible **meeting**

between **Paul** & the **Elders** of the **Ephesian** Church

They all **KNELT Down** - & **Prayed** together

& Acts 20:37-38 says (esv)

37 And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him,

38 being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

There was **Much Weeping** & **Sorrow**

because **Paul** had already **told** these **Elders** in

Acts 20:22–23 (NLT)

22 “And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don’t know what awaits me,

23 except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead.

Paul KNEW - **Long before** today's text
that **this journey** to Jerusalem - **COULD** be his **last**

& **THAT** is what **brought** the **Difficult GOODBYE**
with the **Ephesian Elders**

& so - we **pick up** with this **SAME emotion** - in **Acts 21:1**

Acts 21:1 (ESV)

1 And when we had parted from them (5 trans = “when we had *torn* ourselves away”) **and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara.**

Baam, Baam, Baam

3 stops to begin this **LONG journey** to Jerusalem

Paul was on a **small cargo vessel** that was **stopping** in every town
Like riding the **Greyhound BUS** across the U.S. (**we've done**)

& so - in **V. 2** - Paul finds a **BIGGER ship**
& a **Straighter passage** to the **Jerusalem Coast**

Acts 21:2 (esv)

2 And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia (the coastland near Galilee), **we went aboard and set sail.**

& so now **Paul & Team** - start their **non-stop 400 Mi** sea journey
across the **Mediterranean** - - - Toward . . . **J-Town**

& then **Luke** rights **one Vs** - that **makes** him sound like **a TOURIST**

Acts 21:3 (esv)

3 When we had come in sight of Cyprus (the island - half way), leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria (Just N. of Galilee) and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo.

In **3 short Vs's** - Paul **ends up** back on the **Jerusalem Coast**
Tho this was **prob 8-9 days** of **sailing** since leaving **Miletus**

& so **the team** lands at **TYRE** - (coast above Galilee)
& Paul **KNOWS** there's **some Christians** around there

From our **early days** of studying **Paul**
we **learned** he was a **HELLENIST** (Greek Speaking Jew)

& from **Acts Ch 11** - we know that **some** of the **Hellenist** Christians
had **come up** to the area of **Trye** - after **Stephen was Martyred**

& so - Acts 21:4(a) says (esv)

4 And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days . . .

Paul **SOUGHT OUT** these Disciples - he didn't just **run into** them -
Maybe because he knew **they** were **Hellenists** like him

Paul **gets** to spend **some time** w/ some other **Greek Speaking** Jews
& he **probably** could use some **ENCOURAGEMENT**

& it **looks like** they had **7 days** before the **next boat** Sailed
& **So** - - this sounds **all WELL & GOOD**

EXCEPT AGAIN - the **WILL of God** for Paul's Life
is going to be **CHALLENGED** by these ***"Well-Meaning"*** believers

Acts 21:4(B) (esv)

4 . . . And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

Wait a MINUTE - it was **THRU THE SPIRIT**

that Paul was **CONSTRAINED** (Bound) to **GO** to Jerusalem

& NOW - **THRU THE SPIRIT** - These Believers were telling Paul **NOT to Go** to Jerusalem

Do you think the **HOLY SPIRIT** is like

“You SHOULD Go - You SHOULDN’T Go . . .

You SHOULD, You SHOULDN’T - Should, Shouldn’t . . .

NO - We know the **Holy Spirit** is **NOT DOING THAT !!**

& So **Somebody** here - - - **HAS** to be . . . **WRONG !!**

Can THAT Happen - in the BIBLE ??

YES - The Bible **Faithfully records** the **Shortcomings** & the **Mistakes** of the **Men & Women** of God - **ALL** the time

The Question we need to **GRAPPLE** with is - ***WHO WAS RIGHT ??***

Was **Paul RIGHT** in his **Repeated Vow** to go to **Jerusalem**

NO MATTER the **trouble** or **hardship** ??

OR - were the **Believers RIGHT**

in **telling Paul** the Spirit was saying **DON’T GO ??**

THAT is the Question -

& **the Question** is always **EASIER** to Come by - than **the ANSWER**

Allow me to **THROW OUT** One **possible Explanation**
of **what happened** here with **these Believers**

They obviously **LOVED** Paul - & were **CONCERNED** for him

& they **may have** very well received the **EXACT SAME FACTS**
from the Spirit - that **Paul Received**

That is - they may've **Discerned in the Spirit**
that **Very Serious Trouble** was **coming** for Paul in **Jerusalem**

& they **may've been** the **KIND** of believers
that **WE ALL** tend to **be** at times

That is . . . That **CERTAINLY** God's Will
WOULD NOT Include ANY **SUFFERING** or **TRIALS**

So - **IF** the Holy Spirit **revealed** to them
that **Suffering & Trials** awaited **Paul** in Jerusalem

& they **INTERPRETED** that to mean
that it was **NOT God's Will** for Paul to **experience** that

Then the **problem IS NOT** with what the **Holy Spirit revealed**
The **problem** is with **HOW** the believers **interpreted it**

Does that **make sense** ??

When our son walked in & **said - without a doubt**
that it was **God's Will** that he become a **Corpsman** for the **Marines**

Pam & I immediately **QUESTIONED** his decision - - ***WHY ??***

Because being a **Corpsman** for the **Marines**
means potentially **Serious Suffering & Trials**

& **CERTAINLY** that **MUST NOT BE God's WILL** For our Son

It's NOT that we **didn't support** David

But **because** of the **potential suffering**
our **1st response** was to **Question his decision**

I did the exact **same thing** - & **MUCH MORE DRAMATICALLY**
When I was in **Sudan Africa** - with **very limited communication**

& **my wife told me** in a **broken conversation** that **Breezy** was
going to L.A. = to **meet a guy** she **met** on the **INTERNET**

Now I **REALLY questioned** whether **THAT** was God's Will
& I **BROKE Breeze's heart** - to **get her** to **NOT go**

But that **DID end up** being **God's Will** - & she **MARRIED** that guy
& **he's now** - a **solid part** of our **family**, & our **church**, today

& so **I Believe** - Paul was **having to DEAL** with People
who were **Genuinely Concerned** about Him

& They **DIDN'T WANT** God's Will to **Include Suffering** for Paul
& **I believe** we can **all relate** to that in some way

& So - We continue in Acts 21:5-6 (esv)

5 When our days there were ended (7 days), we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed (6) and said farewell → →

to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

Now - Luke doesn't get all mushy with the Tears & the Kisses like he did with the Ephesian Elder Goodbye

But these believers ALSO did NOT want Paul to go to Jerusalem & so the emotions here were probably very high as well

But ON Paul & the team went - Completely Undeterred & the believers in Tyre - went back home

Acts 21:7-8 (esv)

7 When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais (30 mi south), and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. (maybe to avoid any more drama)

8 On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea (another 30 mi - & close to Jerusalem), and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

Now this is COOL - because this Philip;
Is one of the Original Deacons chosen in Acts Ch 6

Who was sent to Samaria - & started a Revival there - Then God sent him to the desert to tell ONE Ethiopian about Christ

Then God Star-Trek Beamed him up & landed him on the coast & he ended up in Caesarea Married & having BABIES

Acts 21:9 (esv)

9 He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied.

Man - Philip had a GREAT Ministry Career !!

He did a **TON** of **BIG Stuff** - then he **got** to go **live on the coast**
& **raise four daughters** who were all Prophets

Honestly - **I'm telling** you the **TRUTH**

If I Got to **PICK** a **Ministry Career** from the Bible - **It'd be Philip's**

& so **Paul** just **settles in** with **Philip** & his family

They're about **60 mi** from **Jerusalem** now -

& Paul **doesn't want** to go into town **before Pentecost**

HOWEVER - While **they're staying** with Philip

another Prophet comes **TO THEM** - from Jerusalem

& **this prophet** is going to (AGAIN) give **Paul's Companion's**

another reason to Try to **Talk** Paul - **OUT** of God's WILL

Acts 21:10-11 (esv)

10 While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

Now **this Prophet** is **getting** down right **DRAMATIC**

This is **how** the **O.T. Prophets** used to do it

They would frequently **ACT things out** - to **make** their **POINT**

& **here** - Paul - & **all those** with him

Get a **FULL, Graphic Display** of what **AWAITS** Paul in **Jerusalem**

BUT - LOOK Very CAREFULLY at V.11 . . .

**DOES this Prophet say to Paul
that he SHOULD NOT go to Jerusalem ??**

Then **WHY** do we read - in the **very next VS** [\[video w/ v.11\]](#)

Acts 21:12 (esv)

12 When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem.

**NOT again - - - you're kidding me right??
& LOOK at the "WE'S" here**

When **WE** heard this - **WE** Urged Paul **NOT** to go

Oh No - **LUKE** is Including **HIMSELF** in this **Emotional Response**
to **try** to **get Paul** to **NOT do** what he believes he's **CALLED** to

You can just **imagine** it now

"Paul, you can't. Oh no, Paul you mustn't go. Oh know Paul, listen to the Prophet - He's telling you NOT to go !!"

Is the Prophet telling Paul to NOT go ??

Paul **KNOWS** - **beyond** a shadow of a **doubt**
that **God** is **DRIVING him** to Jerusalem

He is **BOUND** - **CONSTRAINED** in the Spirit - **to GO**

But **Every STEP** he takes - **Every STOP** he makes
There's **someone else** telling him he **SHOULDN'T GO**

& so - Finally - Paul kinda CRACKS

He KNOWS God's Will in his heart

It's been CONFIRMED Over & Over again in Him

BUT - his Well-Meaning Friends Finally push him over the edge

Acts 21:13 (esv)

13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

The original Language here implies a CRUSHING - -
by being OVERWHELMED by a Burden

& we see here TWO HUGE Burdens Paul has to deal with now

He had to come to grips with the fact that he was days away
from Difficultly & Suffering in Jerusalem . . .

AND - He has to deal with the Emotional Burden
of all his friends & well-wishers telling him NOT to GO . . .

AND - implying it's the LORD speaking thru them

I don't believe it was the Lord - speaking thru Paul's friends
I believe It was a FALSE Interpretation of the Lord's Will

It's NOT just in our Culture - It was also in THAT culture

That These Believers Logic was - *If it's DIFFICULT & PAINFUL
It MUST NOT be the Lord's WILL for me !!*

It's really **No Different** - from **MANY** in the **church** today - who believe
"God wants me to be Happy & NEVER suffer in any way"

& so there is **NO WAY** that **anything** that **DOESN'T** Make **me happy**
Could EVER be God's Will - - - **NO WAY !!**

But here's the **REAL PROBLEM**

Where did we get - that our **CIRCUMSTANCES** being **Good** or **Bad**
is **what Determines** whether we're in **God's Will** or Not ??

Being Happy - & having **NO Trials**

DOES NOT Necessarily **mean** that we are in **God's Will** . . .

But **ALSO** - Being in **Constant Suffering & Difficulty**

DOES NOT Necessarily **mean** that we are in **God's Will** Either

Listen to OSWALD CHAMBERS

To choose to suffer means that there is something wrong; to choose God's will even if it means suffering is a very different thing. No healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not

When we **Absolutely KNOW** what **God** has **called us** to do

We need to **See PAST** the Circumstances
whether they seem **GOOD** or **BAD**

MIP

Once we **KNOW** God's Will - we need to **DO** God's Will
& we need to **TRUST** the Outcome into God's Hands

Paul **KNOWS** God's Will - - - & he is going **TO DO** God's Will
& he's going to **Trust the OUTCOME** into God's Hands

& **So - Reluctantly** - his **friends** . . . Follow Along

Acts 21:14 (esv)

**14 And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said,
"Let the will of the Lord be done."**

This **sounds** a **little bit** like they **"Threw Up their Hands"**

But **even if** it was with the **wrong motive** - they **SAID** the Right Thing
"Let the will of the Lord be done."

& So **FINALLY** - After **over a year** of **heading** in this Direction
& after **warning** after **warning**
& after **ALL** his friends **begging** & **pleading** with him

Finally - we read Acts 21:15-16 (esv)

**15 After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem.
16 And some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us,
bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple,
with whom we should lodge.**

This **would be** Another **"Greek Speaking Jew"** - **like Paul** (Hellenist)

& **the Disciples** from **Caesarea** bring **Paul** & the team here
Knowing it would be a **safe place** in **Jerusalem** - for Paul to stay

& Guys **Next week** - Everything **CHANGES** in Paul's Life

This **RESOLVE** - to **DO God's Will**
Drastically CHANGES the Remainder of **Paul's Life**
& **we'll see that - starting Next Week**

But today - I'd like to close
with just a little bit about HOW to KNOW God's WILL

1) George Mueller says 95% of Knowing God's Will
is GETTING RID of your Own

& that IS the absolute RIGHT Place to Start

A Living Sacrifice is NOT calling the Shots
He's being . . . Consumed for the Glory of God

So #1 - you've got to Truly offer yourself to God
To be used for His Glory - As HE sees FIT

Then - ALL the Following steps are IMMERSED in the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the COUNSELOR - The GUIDE - The TEACHER
He is God's PRESENCE inside you

& so ALL the steps to Know God's can ONLY be Accomplished
WITHIN - Immersed in - The Work of The Holy Spirit

2) God's Word - Consuming, Interacting, OBEYING

3) Prayer - Surrender, Communion, Two-Way Prayer

4) Counsel - Mature, Discerning, Biblical

5) Conviction - ONLY AFTER - ALL the Other steps
comes the Conviction of God . . .

& That Conviction - brings the PEACE that passes understanding

THAT is what **Paul** had here - **A Conviction** that brought a **PEACE**
that **Surpassed his Circumstances**

& **the REST** of his life becomes **RADICALLY Changed**

- 1) Have NO Will of your Own
- 2) Consume God's Word
- 3) Commune in Prayer
- 4) Seek Godly Counsel
- 5) Wait for Total Conviction

& **really** - If there were only **ONE SECRET** to Knowing God's Will
it'd be - ***An Ever Deepening, Intimate, Relationship with Him***

Living in **Constant Communion** with Him
is the **Easiest Way** - to **KNOWING His Will**

After Communion - We're going to **have some counselors** up here

& they'll be able to **give you** a great **hand-out** called
"Knowing the Will of God" - by **Wayne Mack**

& **W-B-M listeners** - you **email** us, & we'll **send it to you** too

AS we close - May **OUR prayer** be - **the same** as the **LAST WORDS**
of that **Famous Puritan Preacher** - **RICHARD BAXTER**

"Lord, WHAT you will, WHERE you will, and WHEN you will."

Let's Pray