

Series: "Finishing What was Started"

C.R. 3-10-24

"The Most Cherished Voice"

Text: Acts 21: 1-14

Intro: Do you ever wish that God spoke to us today like He did in the days of the Old Testament. And God spoke to Abraham, and God spoke to Moses in the burning bush. He told Joshua what to do very clearly as he faced the walls of Jericho. I have even made the statement at times that "God would have to burn a bush in my yard, without it burning up for me to do...."

Swindoll said it this way, *The longer I live, the more I wish it were easier to determine the will of God. I usually have less difficulty following God's instructions than determining exactly what He wants.*

Are you in the middle of deciding this morning? Maybe you're not but you will be. How do we know what to do? And when we know what to do, do we have the courage to do it?

Martin Luther in April of 1521 faced a very difficult task. He was going to stand in front of what was considered at the time the who's who list of religious people. Luther would pray that night "*How frail and sensitive is the flesh of men, and the devil so powerful and active through his apostles and the wise of this world... O Thou, my God, my God help me against the reason and wisdom of all the world! Thou must do it, Thou Alone! For his cause is not mine but Thine. For myself, I have no business here with these great lords of the world. Indeed, I too, desire to enjoy days of peace and quiet and to be undisturbed. But Thine O Lord is the cause. And it is righteous and of eternal importance. Stand by me, Thou faithful and eternal God! I rely on no man.* Just prior to the night of this prayer Luther was told by his devoted friend, George Spalatian, not to come to Worms or he would suffer the same fate of John Hus. Luther replied back, "*Though Hus was burned, the truth was not burned, and Christ still lives.*" He went on to say, "*I shall go to Worms, though there were as many devils as tiles on the roofs*".

How do you know this strongly? How could Luther or Paul feel so sure, when the voices around them were saying something else. I can tell you that I have lived in the world of God telling me one thing and others telling me something else. And they were not doing it for my hurt. They were sincere. They loved me and thought that what they were telling me was best for me. There is a tension between the leading of the Spirit, and the advice offered by godly people who care deeply for us.

So today let's examine how the Apostle Paul deal with this and see what we can glean from it.

1) Paul's Purposed Plans

- a. **Read Acts 19:21.** Note the phrase Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem.
- b. **Read Acts 20:22.**I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem...
- c. In our text today, Paul makes it clear that this is the plan. Not matter the cost this is what I must do.
- d. I cannot look past these texts. I believe wholeheartedly that Paul was supposed to go to Jerusalem. He did not make a mistake by going.

2) Paul's Repeated Warnings (v.4, 12)

- a. The question that comes from this is did Paul sin by resisting the repeated warnings of these people.
- b. I have already told you that I think Paul was being obedient by going to Jerusalem. The Spirit was leading him that way.
- c. But it had to be difficult when those that you love and trust, and those that you pray with and worship with are telling you not to do it.
- d. **It is my estimation that God was not trying to prevent Paul from going but rather he was preparing Paul to go.**
- e. The warnings were from God by Agabus, but nowhere does it say that Agabus told him not to go, he simply showed him what was to come.

3) Paul's Clear Decision. (v.13)

- a. As Paul tells the crowd what is in his heart, you can hear how much he loves them.
- b. He used the phrase “breaking my heart”. He sees them crying as they know Jerusalem holds some very hard days for their friend Paul.
- c. This was not easy on any of them, but Paul would not be persuaded. He would follow the voice of God.
- d. Back in **chapter 9:16** Paul was told “I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name”.
- e. In **Galatians 1:10** Paul wrote “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.
- f. Paul knew there would be a cost, and he was more than willing to pay.
- g. **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.”*

Conclusion: As I studied this passage I thought about a few things. I believe today that everyone of us in this building are living our lives under the influence of something. I believe that **1)** We are living our lives as we want to. Our choices. Our desires. Etc.... **2)** We are living our lives as someone else wants us to. Our parents, grandparents, spouses, peers, or **3)** We are living our life as God wants us to. We are responding to Him. We are listening to Him. A heart that is saved, Spirit-filled, and submitted to God can know God’s will.

Jesus said, *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you” (John 16:13-15).*

God longs to guide us, and we can know what His will is. He is not trying to hide it from us. The real question is are we willing to do His will.

It is ok to seek advice but choose your counselors wisely. Mature Christians who live the Christ life, who will pray for you. And it is good to seek out more than 1.

If you give advice be careful. Listen twice as much as you talk. And I think instead of offering immediate advice, take some to time to pray.

Whether you give or receive remember we can all make mistakes. It is possible for wise people to give bad advice.

God gave me this this week. "The Holy Spirit's Voice needs to be so cherished within us that even our closest people can't talk us out of it".