

Radiant Church, April 19, 2020
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Acts 21:1-16

Acts 12:1-3 *And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo.*

Acts 21:4 *And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.*

Paul was already “resolved” (19:21) and “constrained by the Spirit” (20:22)

Acts 21:5-6 *When our days there were ended, 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 and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.*

Acts 21:7-9 *When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied.*

Acts 21:10-11 *While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 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.’”*

Matthew’s Gospel tells us what Jesus said, and how Peter tried to encourage Jesus not to go to Jerusalem

Luke 18:31-33 *...See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.*

Acts 21:12 *When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem.*

Trying to persuade is not prohibiting

It’s a pretty good motivation on their part: they want to protect Paul from suffering

Acts 21:13 *The 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.”*

Is this “Paul’s Gethsemane?” (c.f. Luke 22:42) The anguish of following God’s will

Acts 21:14 *And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, “Let the will of the Lord be done.”*

Acts 21:15-16 *After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. 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.*

Why did all these fellow believers, in several cities, try to convince Paul to not go to Jerusalem?

1. Paul’s friends demonstrated the all-too-common inclination of being quick to know God’s will for someone else
2. These well-meaning believers were trying to make God’s will conform to their own desires. If Paul gets imprisoned or killed, we will lose the benefit of his teaching
 - a. God wants me to be happy. I’m not happy. I’m out of God’s will
 - b. God doesn’t want me to suffer pain. I am in pain. I’m out of God’s will.
 - c. Fulfilling and fun are not always mutually inclusive
3. Paul’s friends showed their spiritual focus to be horizontal, not vertical. Their love and concern for Paul was admirable, but they ignored what was good for God’s name, His mission and Kingdom expansion

Galatians 1:10 *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?*

How can we discern God’s will in what other believers say to us?

The “Four Counsels”

The counsel of God’s Word

The counsel of the Holy Spirit

The counsel of conscience

The counsel of others

Love people, but love Jesus and doing His will more

Value others’ input. Listen to counsel, but listen to good counselors

Spend at least as much time seeking God’s will in Scripture and in prayer

Realize that God’s will may not be what you want.

If/when we know what God wants us to do, we have to do it

Following Jesus will cost you, but not following Jesus will cost you more

Mark 8:36-38 *For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.*