

## It's Good to Listen

Acts 21:1-27

4/ 24/ 05

### Intro

We meet up with Paul on his third missionary journey. He has been traveling by ship and is determined to go to Jerusalem. Here, in chapter 21, he lands at the ancient city of Tyre. He spend about a week there with believers in Jesus Christ, who keep telling him in the Spirit not to go to Jerusalem.

There is much scholarly discussion about whether Paul was being told here not to go to Jerusalem, yet the scripture seems plain that he is being warned in the Spirit not to go.

This is a very important scripture for us because we also need to understand the importance of listening to the Lord.

But it is also a great scripture in regards to decision making in the Lord.

### **These are insights in deciding what to do and learning to listen to the Lord.**

#### **I. The Lord Often Warns Us**

##### A. He wants us to listen

- The Holy Spirit had warned Paul of danger before, and Paul was certainly no stranger to troubles.
- But this warning is different. It seems that the words are very clear, “not to set foot in Jerusalem.”

**Jeremiah 42:6, “Whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, we will listen to the voice of the Lord our God to whom we are sending you, so that it may go well with us when we listen to the voice of the Lord our God.”**

- I don't believe that Paul was in any way hard of heart.
- But it is true that God was warning Paul and he could not be persuaded.

##### B. We often have good reasons not to listen

- Paul was not harboring sin, or was hard of heart.
- He had good reasons why he wanted to go to Jerusalem.
- We know that though he was called to bring the gospel to the Gentiles, his heart was also with the Jews.

**Romans 9:1-3, “I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,”**

- Another good reason Paul had was found in verses 13 -- courage.
- He was ready to be bound and even to die for the cause of Christ.

### C. Listen to His warnings

- God was giving Paul several warnings that he should not set foot in Jerusalem.
- If we look back on our decisions, most people will remember that God was giving them warnings not to do this or that.
- And we often have good reasons for doing what we do...

**Illus – There was once a man who was in charge of a lighthouse. It was difficult to reach him so they would bring oil out to him once every three months. During a very cold winter, his neighbors would ask for a little oil...**

**Deuteronomy 32:46-47, “Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law. For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.”**

## II. **The Will of the Lord Be Done**

### A. God’s will has many parts

- The phrase, “The will of the Lord be done,” is a way of saying, *Lord, by Your sovereign hand, have Your way in this situation. We’ve done all we can do.*
- It shows us that God’s will is still in operation even when things happen He does not want.

- This is how the sovereign will of God interfaces with the freedom of choice that God has given men.

**Illus – God did not want *Adam and Eve* to sin, but His sovereign will is still in operation. God did not want *Israel* to reject Christ, but He is still in control. God did not want *Stephen* to be stoned, or *Peter* to deny Christ, but God is still in control.**

- That is why God even gives prophecies of those things He does not want to happen.

**Matthew 26:34-35, Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.” All the disciples said the same thing too.**

**Ephesians 1:10-12, “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.”**

**Acts 4:27-28, “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”**

### B. God expects us to make decisions

- God seldom guides us with messages before we make decisions.
- God expects us to use wisdom when deciding.

**James 1:5, “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”**

- God expects us to make sure that what we do is not against His Word; that is the standard by which we should judge all things.

**Psalm 119:9-11, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.”**

C. Be willing to change your mind

- Sometimes we make a bad decision and God gives us warnings that it is not what He wants.

**Illus – Paul was trying to go into Asia, but God hindered them.**

**Acts 16:6-7, “They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;”**

**Ezekiel 3:21, “However, if you have warned the righteous man that the righteous should not sin and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning;”**

### III. God Still Uses Us

A. God can even use our mistakes for His glory

- This is a marvelous truth. God, by His sovereign hand, uses all things for His glory, even our mistakes.

**Illus – Paul was used of God to witness in Jerusalem and then later, in Rome.**

**Acts 23:11, But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, “Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.”**

- During the next five years of imprisonment, Paul was used of God to write many scriptures, we call the prison epistles, or the letters from prison.

**Illus – I went to college to become a doctor, was a terrible student, but God used it for His glory. How many CC pastors had terrible lives, but God used it for His glory.**

B. Be on your guard

- Just because God uses even our mistakes for His glory, does not mean that we should be careless in life.
- We should always be in our guard.

**I Peter 5:8-9, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of**

**suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.”**

**1 Peter 1:13-16, “Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”**

Conclusion
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**Take comfort in the fact that God uses all things for His glory, but let us be careful to listen to when God is warning us of danger. May we hide God’s Word in our hearts, so that we might know His will in all we do.**