

**Text:** Ac 21.10-14

**Proposition:** The hardest part of dealing with the will of God is submitting to it.

This morning we talked about the “static” around our text, but not so much the text itself. This afternoon, I want to look at our text and see what it is teaching us.

I suppose one could derive a couple of themes out of the passage, but to me the predominant theme is the will of God and how these Christians interacted with their understanding of it.

The message isn't about *discovering* the will of God.

The message is *how to respond* to the will of God.

Let's read our passage again, and talk about:

### *The Will of God*

Read Ac 21.10-14

**Proposition:** The hardest part of dealing with the will of God is submitting to it.

## I. The clear will of God

A. How Paul saw the will of God in this matter

1. Two statements about Paul's commitment to this journey (Ac 19.21, 20.22)

Ac 19.21 ¶ Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

Ac 20.22 “And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,

2. Ambiguity of the word “spirit/Spirit”
  - a. Same word used to refer to human spirit or Holy Spirit
  - b. My notes on these earlier references only give a little help from the commentaries
  - c. In a message about 20.22, on Aug 29, I sided (cautiously) with spirit

d. However: note this comment from Constable

“He believed the Spirit wanted him to go to Jerusalem (19:21; 20:22) so he ‘set his face’ to go there (cf. Luke 9:51).”<sup>1</sup>

e. Both passages have various interpretations in the translations (some go with “spirit,” some with “Spirit”)

3. Grammatical argument from 19.21 from Darryl Bock:

a. “purposed” is a middle voice verb [subject acts on itself] – “Paul purposed *in himself*”

b. The word, “necessary,” in the ending quotation implies Divine direction – “I **must** also see Rome.”

c. Bock’s conclusion: “Paul purposed in himself *by the Spirit*, to go... [concluding] I must see Rome”

I am not entirely sure that these two passages refer to the Holy Spirit, and the translators are likewise divided.

4. However: Paul clearly had a determination to go to Jerusalem

a. He wouldn’t be turned aside

b. He was ready to die if need be

B. I think it is safe to say that Paul was certain that he must make this trip

1. After his statement in Acts 20.22, Paul adds this:

Ac 20.24 “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

2. He certainly saw himself on a course set by the Lord himself

<sup>1</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 21.13.

### 3. He determined to fulfill the course set before him faithfully

The apostle had a clear sense of the will of God for his life. We don't always have so clear a sense in our lives, but on this occasion, I think it is safe to say Paul was clear about what he should do.

## II. Clear warnings from God

### A. We've already noted previous warnings

#### 1. Back to Acts 20

Ac 20.22-23 "And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,<sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

a. This warning is consistent with the prophecy of Agabus

b. Where did these warnings take place?

1) Paul is speaking in Miletus

2) He recently travelled from

a) Corinth

b) To Philippi

c) To Troas

d) To Miletus

Did Paul receive warnings in each place? What form did those warnings take?

#### 2. And again, earlier in ch. 21, in Tyre, another warning

Ac 21.4 After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.

### B. Now we come to Agabus, and his warning

#### 1. Agabus is clearly one of the NT prophets (Acts 11, predicted the famine)

2. Agabus behaves here much like OT prophets had done
  - a. Ahijah the Shilonite tore his cloak in pieces to show Jeroboam how God would divide Solomon's kingdom (1 Ki 11.29-39)
  - b. Isaiah commanded to prophesy "naked and barefoot" to show how the Assyrians would take Egyptians captive (Isa 20.2-4)
    - 1) Three years!
    - 2) Nakedness probably means no outer garments ... but shameful enough!
  - c. Ezekiel mimicked Babylonian siege of Jerus. by setting up a model of the city while in Babylonian captivity himself (Ezek 4.1-3)
  - d. And more...
3. Here Agabus acts out Paul's bondage

Ac 21.11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

- a. Vivid language: "arriving, taking, binding" all seen somewhat simultaneously with his proclamation
- b. "This is what the Holy Spirit says..."
- c. Further, that phrase resembles the OT "thus saith the Lord..."

### C. The cumulative effect...

1. They are in Caesarea, just a couple of days away from Jerusalem
2. The party heard the repeated warnings about trouble in Jerusalem in city after city
3. Here comes Agabus, a man of reputation, warning specifically about bondage, arrest, imprisonment
4. In Tyre, "they" warned Paul not to go
5. Here, "we" as well as "the local residents" (Philip, his daughters, etc.) warned Paul not to go

### III. The only option for God's people

#### A. Paul's response is to set aside the concerns

##### 1. Paul says they are breaking his heart

“‘break in pieces’ ... is something like ‘crushed to powder’ ... it is unlikely to mean causing emotional distress but rather Paul's will, that is, ‘crushing my resolve.’”<sup>2</sup>

“The verb for ‘breaking’ (συνθρύπτοντες, *synthryptontes*) the heart is vivid, as it is often used of beating clothes to clean them (Polhill 1992: 436): they are pounding on Paul's emotions.”<sup>3</sup>

##### 2. Paul states his determination

###### a. Ready for arrest

###### b. Ready even to die

One commentator mentioned Regulus as an illustration. Regulus was a former consul of Rome, fought against Carthage, but was captured. Carthaginians sent him back to Rome with a peace proposal, threatening death if he didn't bring back a peace treaty.

Regulus recommended against the treaty, then insisted on fulfilling his parole and returning to Carthage to certain death, rather than break his word.

Or another illustration, Luther's resolve to attend the Diet of Worms despite concerns for his safety. Luther is supposed to have said, “Though devils be as many in Worms as tiles upon the roofs, yet thither will I go.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> L. Scott Kellum, *Acts*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2020), 244.

<sup>3</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 639.

<sup>4</sup> Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Ac 21.12.

## B. The response of God's people (14)

Ac 21.14 And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"

1. Silence: they all fell silent
2. Submission: "the will of the Lord be done"

This is our only option when confronted by God's will.

### Conclusion:

Now, most of us don't get this kind of advance warning of events in our lives. We must make decisions based on the best light that we have.

However, we do have clear instructions in God's will in many areas of our lives right now.

Ep 5.17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

What is the will of God? Paul in Ephesians goes on to say, "Don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit."

That is the will of God.

The rest of the Bible contains like statements of the will of God for us, all over and everywhere.

How are you doing in response to God's will clearly laid out in the Bible?

**Proposition:** The hardest part of dealing with the will of God is submitting to it.