

Introduction (Acts 21:1-39)

God sometimes reveals things to us that we have a difficult time receiving. Sometimes, we don't know what to do about what we have heard. Sometimes, it does not line up with what we think should happen. Sometimes, our own soulish desires taint what we hear. For example, in Matthew 16, Jesus began to prophetically tell His disciples what was going to happen to Him. He said He must go to Jerusalem, and then He was going to suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and raised on the third day. Those were hard things for the disciples to hear. Their leader, the Messiah, was going to suffer and be put to death. Their hope for the Messiah was that He was going to restore the kingdom of Israel, and get them out from under the Roman rule. They had a different idea of what was supposed to happen. But Jesus had heard correctly that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer and be put to death.

(Matt 16:21) "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day."

When Peter heard the Lord tell him this, he said, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." He did not want to see the Lord suffer. He did not want His Lord to be put to death. No, "this shall never happen to You." Notice how the Lord answered Peter, "you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

(Matt 16:22-23) "Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

We saw a few weeks ago that Paul was given prophetic direction by the Holy Spirit for his next four years. He was to go to Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem, and then to Rome. He also knew that he was going to suffer. He knew that it was God's will for him to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome. But, there are some Peter's in his life that told him, "Don't go to Jerusalem. This should not happen to you." In my opinion, they were not setting their mind on God's interests, but on man's. After much futility, they concluded, "The will of the Lord be done."

(Acts 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.'"

In our passage today, Paul starts in Miletus. He has already been to Macedonia and Achaia. From there he went to Troas and Assos. From there he went to Miletus and met with the Ephesian elders. He said his farewell and he set sail for Jerusalem. On his way, he has two stopovers, and at both places he receives prophetic warnings about what lies before him. They strongly encourage him not to go. Those were the people who did not want Paul to suffer. But Paul knows that he must go to Jerusalem. When he gets to Jerusalem, he meets with James and the elders. They devised a plan to keep him out of trouble with the Jewish believers. Paul followed their plan, but the non-believing Jews stirred things up. They laid hands on him, and dragged him out of the temple, and intended to kill him. But, the commander of the Roman cohort stepped in and ordered him to be put in chains. Everything that had been prophesied came true. The will of the Lord was done.

This morning, we will look at the prophetic warnings, the plan of the elders, and Paul's arrest. All of these things lined up with God's will for Paul's life. It was God's will for him to go to Jerusalem, and then to Rome, where he was going to stand before Caesar. Because it is a long passage, we will read it as we go through it.

God's Will Be Done

1. The Prophetic Warnings (vs 1-14)
2. The Plan of the Elders (vs 15-26)
3. Paul's Arrest (vs 27-39)

1. The Prophetic Warnings (vs 1-14)

As Paul is en route to Jerusalem, he has two distinct prophetic warnings. The first warnings come at Tyre, and the second warnings come in Caesarea. These are not his first warnings. In Acts 20, Paul told the Ephesian elders that he was bound by the Spirit and is on his way to Jerusalem, and that in every city he goes to the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies that bonds and afflictions are waiting for him. **The Holy Spirit was preparing Paul for what he was about to face.**

(Acts 20:22-23) "And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, {23} except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me."

Notice what Paul said to the Ephesian elders at Miletus. "And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me." Paul was bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem and to Rome. **It was God's will for Paul to go to Jerusalem and to suffer there.** At the same time, the Holy Spirit was speaking through the brethren in every city, warning Paul of the bonds and afflictions that were awaiting them. The two prophetic warnings today are just a continuation of the trend. **The Holy Spirit was confirming God's will for Paul.**

A. The warning at Tyre (vs 1-6)

After Paul set sail from Miletos, they ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes. From there they went to Patara. They changed ships and caught one crossing over to Phoenicia. They sailed on the south side of Cyprus and went on to Syria and landed at Tyre. The ship was going to unload its cargo at Tyre.

(Acts 21:1-3) "When we had parted from them and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara; {2} and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. {3} When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo."

The first thing that Paul and his team did was to look up the disciples. **Fellowship with the brethren was a priority for Paul.** Fellowship was important to the early church, and Paul was an example to all of us about the priority of fellowship. They stayed in Tyre for seven days. There must have been a lot of cargo to unload.

(Acts 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."

While Paul and his team were with the Christians in Tyre, they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem. How do you reconcile that Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem and Rome, and then people through the Spirit were telling him not to set foot in Jerusalem? In Acts 19:21, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, and then on to Rome. Now, through the same Holy Spirit, the brethren are telling him not to set foot in Jerusalem. God does not speak with a forked tongue, and He is not confused. I believe that the Holy Spirit revealed to the disciples at Tyre that Paul was going to suffer in Jerusalem. I believe it is a warning of the things to come to prepare Paul for what was awaiting him? I believe that the brethren were correctly hearing from the Spirit, but were misinterpreting what the Spirit was saying. I believe, like Peter felt for Jesus, they did not want their beloved Paul to suffer. They were led by the Spirit, but their warnings to Paul were out of their own soulish desires. They did not want their brother to suffer at the hands of the Jews in Jerusalem. But Paul was following God's will for his life.

(Acts 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.'"

When Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, the Lord told Ananias that Paul was a chosen instrument of God's, and that he was going to bear His name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel, and that he was going to suffer much for God's name sake. Paul was going to appear before King Agrippa, and then Caesar. It was part of God's plan to testify before kings and to suffer for His name's sake.

(Acts 9:15-16) "But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; {16} for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.'"

Some Christians believe that it is not God's will for His children to suffer or be afflicted. Let me quickly address this. The Holy Spirit told Ananias that Paul was going to suffer much for Jesus' name sake. Paul suffered and He was in the will of God. That teaching does not line up with the Scriptures.

Let's look at Jesus. In Luke 9 He told His disciples that the Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected, killed, and raised up. **It was God's will for Jesus to suffer.** After Jesus had suffered and had risen from the dead, he joined two men on the road to Emmaus. He explained to them that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory. It was God's will for Christ to suffer. That does not mean that Jesus looked forward to suffering. If you recall, while Jesus was praying in the garden prior to His arrest and crucifixion, He told the father, "If You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." I don't think Jesus looked forward to the suffering that He was going to go through. I think it was necessary for Him to suffer so that our sins could be forgiven. Jesus suffered for us.

(Luke 9:22) "saying, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.'"

(Luke 24:26) "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"

(Luke 22:41-42) "And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, {42} saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."

We see that it was God's will for Paul to suffer. It was God's will for Jesus to suffer. What about the rest of us? In Paul's letter to the Romans he said that if we are children, we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if we suffer with Him. In other words, one of the signs of being a heir of Christ is that we will suffer with Him. Then, Paul said that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. It was God's will for Christ to suffer. It was God's will for Paul to suffer. **It is God's will for all true believers to suffer.**

(Rom 8:17-18) "and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. {18} For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

When Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, he said that the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance. In other words, it is not a rare or one-offish incident. The sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance. The good news is that even though the sufferings are ours in abundance, so is the comfort of God given to us in abundance. We have comfort in our sufferings, and we have a future glory that far exceeds any sufferings in this life.

(2 Cor 1:5) "For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ."

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he says that they had not only been granted to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, and that they were experiencing the same conflict that they had seen in him. It was just another example of God's people suffering for Christ.

(Phil 1:29-30) "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, {30} experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me."

Peter gives some instruction and understanding about our suffering. First, he said that Christ suffered for us, and left an example for us to follow in His steps. We have been called for this purpose, to follow Jesus' example of suffering. Second, Peter tells us when we suffer unjustly, it finds favor with God. There is a difference between suffering for our own wrongdoing and suffering unjustly. When we suffer for our sins, God is not glorified, and this does not find favor with God. We should live our lives in a way that we do not suffer for our sins. It is not God's will for you to suffer this way. It is God's will for us to live holy and righteous lives. **It is God's will for us to suffer for doing what is right.** God wants us to do what is right no matter what the consequences will be, and if we suffer for doing what is right, it finds favor with Him. Paul was going to suffer for the gospel, and it was going to find favor with God.

(1 Pet 2:19-20) "For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up

under sorrows when suffering unjustly. {20} For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. {21} For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,”

In Acts 23:11, after Paul has been arrested in Jerusalem, the Lord stood by Paul's side and said, “take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.” Paul had heard correctly in Acts 19. He was to go to Jerusalem and then go on to Rome. This was God's will being accomplished in Paul's life. And Jesus was encouraging Paul because of his faithful witness and suffering for the gospel.

(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.”

When the seven days were up, Paul and his companions left. The brethren at Tyre escorted them until they were out of the city. When I grew up in Iran, whenever an American family left for vacation, everyone would go to the airport and see them off. When people returned, we would go to the airport and welcome them back. There was a strong sense of community among the expatriates. When they got to the beach, they knelt down and prayed, and then they said farewell to one another. What a great example for us. When we have people over or meet with people, pray for one another before you leave. **The early church was devoted to prayer.** It was part of their DNA. Praying for one another was a natural and normal thing for them to do. After they had prayed, Paul and his team boarded the ship and the brethren returned home again.

(Acts 21:5-6) “When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. {6} Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again.”

It is God's will for us to pray. Paul wrote the Thessalonians to “rejoice always, pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. The early church prayed without ceasing, and were devoted to it. They understood that it was God's will for us to pray.

(1 Thess 5:16-18) “Rejoice always; {17} pray without ceasing; {18} in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

B. The warning at Caesarea (vs 7-12)

After leaving Tyre, they arrived at Ptolemais. What is the first thing that Paul and his team did? They greeted the brethren. Fellowship was a priority to Paul and the early church. The early church was relational. They sought out fellowship with one another. Another thing that we see from this is how connected the churches were. Even though there were local churches with their own elders, they were all part of the universal church. Paul stayed with the brethren for a day.

(Acts 21:7) “When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after

greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day.”

On the next day, they came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist. He was one of the seven deacons raised up in Jerusalem to take care of serving the widows. He was a man of good character and reputation, and was full of the Spirit and of wisdom. He met all the qualifications given in Acts 6. He had left Jerusalem and was now living in Caesarea. He probably left as a result of the persecution that came after Stephen was stoned in Acts 8-9. His whole life was disrupted by the persecution that Paul and others brought against the church. Now, he brings in the man that held the coats of those who stoned Stephen. It is a wonderful picture of reconciliation and forgiveness.

(Acts 21:8) “On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.”

(Acts 6:3, 5) “Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task...{5}... and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.”

Luke tells us that Philip had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. He does not mention any prophecies that they may have had for Paul, only that they were prophetesses. In both the Old and New Testament, there were women who were prophetesses. God gives women these gifts, and these gifts are the greater gifts. Paul encourages us to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially that we might prophesy. Why? Because prophecy edifies the whole body. God wants to use women to edify the body, which is why he gives these greater gifts to women also.

(Acts 21:9) “Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.”

There was also a prophet there named Agabus. He had come down from Judea, and he gave a prophetic picture to Paul. 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.’” Agabus had heard accurately.

(Acts 21:10-11) “As we were staying there for some 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, “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.’”

After they heard Agabus' prophecy, Paul's team and the local residents began begging him not to go to Jerusalem. Luke is the one writing this, and he said, “we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem.” Nobody wanted Paul to be bound and delivered over to the Gentiles. Nobody wanted him to suffer, but it was only their will, not the will of God.

(Acts 21:12) “When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem.”

C. The will of God be done (vs 13-14)

Notice Paul's response to them. "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Paul openly shared his emotions with them. He saw their love and concern for him. At the same time, he knew that it was God's will for him to go. He was bound by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem. Notice also that Paul was willing to be bound and even to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. How many of us are willing to suffer and even die for the name of the Lord Jesus? Sometimes we do not even share the gospel because we fear rejection. Are we willing to witness for Jesus for far greater consequences than this, that we would be bound and put to death for witnessing for Christ? May God give us boldness and courage to witness for the name of the Lord Jesus.

(Acts 21:13) "Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

When they realized that Paul was not going to be persuaded, Luke, the rest of Paul's team, and the rest of the brethren at Caesarea fell silent, and remarked, "The will of the Lord be done!" That is exactly what Jesus had prayed. This was not their will, but they prayed for God's will to be done.

(Acts 21:14) "And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"

2. The Plan of the Elders (vs 15-26)

After Paul had spent time in Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem. Caesarea was a coastal city with an elevation of 37 feet, and Jerusalem is at an elevation of 2,582 feet. So, it is a gradual ascent from Caesarea to Jerusalem. In the Psalms, you have the Psalms of Ascent. These were Psalms that the Jews would recite when they made their trips to Jerusalem for the various feasts. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, so it is highly likely that he was reciting some of these Psalms of Ascent as he traveled from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

(Acts 21:15) "After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem."

Paul and his team were accompanied by some of the disciples from Caesarea. They were also accompanied by Mnason, who was from Cyprus. He had been a disciple for a long time, and was well known. He also had a house in Jerusalem, and Paul and his team were going to stay with him. In Acts 20:4, Luke mentioned all the men who were traveling with Paul. There were eight other men with Paul, making a total of nine people that Mnason was going to host.

(Acts 21:16) "Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge."

A. The greeting at Jerusalem (vs 15-19)

When Paul arrived, the brethren received Paul and his team gladly. They were excited to see him. The following day, Paul went in to meet with James. He was the Lord's half-brother, and he was leading the church in Jerusalem. Luke mentions that all the elders were also present. Paul met with all the pastors of the church. Luke tells us that Paul greeted them. The typical greeting in Israel is Shalom, which means peace. In America, we say hi or hello, but in the Middle East, a greeting is far more

significant. It is a blessing of peace to the other person. After Paul had greeted them, he began to relate to them one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. I imagine that this probably took a very long time. Paul had gone to Jerusalem after his first apostolic journey to settle some doctrinal issues. I believe he is now sharing everything that has happened since then.

(Acts 21:17-19) “After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. {18} And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. {19} After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.”

B. The Nazrite vow (vs 20-25)

After hearing Paul, they did two things. First, they began glorifying God. When we hear testimonies of what God has done, we should give thanks to God and glorify Him. The second thing they did was to share a plan with Paul which would defuse any potential problems with Jewish believers. They told Paul that there were many thousands among the Jews who had become believers. Even though they were believers, they were still zealous for the Law. They had been told that Paul was teaching Jews to forsake Moses and the Law. They had been told that he was telling Jews not to circumcise their children and not to walk according to the customs. The leadership of the church was aware of the mindset of these Jewish believers, and they wanted to head off any potential conflicts.

(Acts 21:20-21) “And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; {21} and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.”

The leaders said, “what, then, is to be done? That is a great question and prayer for leaders. When leaders become aware of situations, that is the question to ask and pray. Lord, what should we do to resolve this problem. Proverbs tells us that we are not to lean on our own understanding, but to acknowledge Him in all our ways, and He will make our paths straight. These leaders are asking the right question. Therefore, James and the elders came up with a plan to defuse the potentially explosive situation. **Good leaders do not just solve problems; they look ahead and mitigate potential risks and problems.**

(Acts 21:22) “What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.”

(Pr 3:5-6) “Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. {6} In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.”

Their plan was to have Paul take a Nazrite vow. They said that they have four men who are under a vow. They asked Paul to take them and purify himself along with them, and to pay for their expenses so that they may shave their heads. The Jews in Jerusalem would see that Paul had shaved his head and was walking orderly and keeping the Law.

(Acts 21:23-24) “Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; {24} take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may

shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law.”

The elders also reaffirmed the decision that was made in Acts 15, when Paul and Barnabas had met with them regarding the Law. The decision made at that time was for Gentiles to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what is strangled and from fornication. Gentiles were to be careful not to offend or upset a weaker believer. Additionally, they were to abstain from sexual immorality. Gentile believers are not under the Law, but we are under the Law of Christ, which is to love our neighbor, and to live holy and righteous lives. They communicated God's will for believers.

(Acts 21:25) “But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication.”

God's will for us is sanctification. Paul wrote the Thessalonians about how to walk and please God. He wrote, “for this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.” He then told them not to transgress or defraud our brothers, and that God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. God's will for us is to suffer, and for us to be sanctified. In my mind, I separate the will of God into two categories. I believe there is a general will. His general will is for people to be saved. His general will is for us to live lives that glorify and honor him. His general will for us is sanctification. His general will is for us to suffer for the sake of the gospel. I also believe that there is a specific will for each of us. It was God's will for Paul to go to Achaia, Macedonia, Jerusalem, and Rome. That is not God's will for you and I; that was God's specific will for Paul. The elders have just restated to Paul and his team God's general will for Gentile believers. That is our desire. We want to live our lives in a way that pleases God.

(1 Thess 4:3-7) “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; {4} that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, {5} not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; {6} and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. {7} For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.”

C. Paul Heeds their Counsel (vs 26)

Notice Paul's response. “Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.” Paul did not listen to the pleas of the brethren in Tyre or Caesarea, but he did listen to the counsel of the elders. It was God's specific will for Paul to go to Jerusalem, so he did God's will. It is God's general will that we give no offense to our brothers, and be at peace with all men. Paul readily heeded their counsel and followed their plan.

(Acts 21:26) “Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.”

The law of the Nazrite vow can be found in Numbers 6. It is a vow of separation and dedication to the Lord. A man would shave his head, and abstain from grapes or wine, and from touching anything unclean. At the end of his vow, he would shave his head again, and offer his hair as an offering to the Lord. He would also bring other offerings. He would bring a one-year old lamb without defect for a burnt offering, and a one-year old ewe lamb for a sin offering, and a ram for a peace offering. He was also to bring a basket of unleavened cakes and wafers with oil, and a drink offering.

(Num 6:13-18) "Now this is the law of the Nazirite when the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall bring the offering to the doorway of the tent of meeting. {14} He shall present his offering to the LORD: one male lamb a year old without defect for a burnt offering and one ewe-lamb a year old without defect for a sin offering and one ram without defect for a peace offering, {15} and a basket of unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil and unleavened wafers spread with oil, along with their grain offering and their drink offering. {16} Then the priest shall present them before the LORD and shall offer his sin offering and his burnt offering. {17} He shall also offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, together with the basket of unleavened cakes; the priest shall likewise offer its grain offering and its drink offering. {18} The Nazirite shall then shave his dedicated head of hair at the doorway of the tent of meeting, and take the dedicated hair of his head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of peace offerings.

The elders asked Paul to pay for all the expenses of the four men. If the expenses were just for the haircuts of these men, that would not be such a big deal. If the expenses of these men included the offerings that they had to make, it would have been a considerable cost. I estimate the cost for fifteen lambs, unleavened cakes, wafers, oil, and grain to be around two thousand dollars in today's economy. Paul was more than willing to do that to make peace with his Jewish brothers in Christ.

3. Paul's Arrest (vs 27-40)

It was God's specific will for Paul to go to Jerusalem; he was bound by the Spirit. It was God's general will for him to live at peace with his brothers. It was God's specific will for Paul to be arrested by the Jews and turned over to the Gentiles.

A. The False Accusation (vs 27-29)

After seven days had passed, Jews from Asia, who had also come to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, saw Paul in the temple. These same Jews had stirred up crowds in Asia, and they did the same thing in Jerusalem. They began to stir up the crowd, and they laid hands on Paul.

(Acts 21:27) "When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him,"

They stirred up the crowds with false accusations. This was their pattern. They did it to Paul in Asia, and they are doing the same thing in Jerusalem. They accused Paul of preaching against the Jews, and the Law. They did not know Paul's heart. He loved his brethren. In Paul's letter to the Romans, he said, "for I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Paul did not preach against his brethren. He preached to them.

He exhorted them to believe and receive Christ as their Messiah so they could be saved.

(Acts 21:28-29) "crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."

(Rom 9:3) "For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,"

These Jews saw Trophimus, the Ephesian, and supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. Many rumors are spread by people who do not know the facts. We can be guilty of stirring up strife by saying or repeating things that are not based on facts. One of the names of the devil is the accuser of the brethren. He has been doing that for thousands of years, and he still uses the same tactics against Christians today. If you are wrongly accused; recognize the source.

(Acts 21:29) "For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple."

(Rev 12:10) "Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night."

B. The Crowd Seizes Paul (vs 30-31a)

As a result of the false charges, the city was provoked, and the people rushed together and took hold of Paul, and they dragged him out of the temple. Then, they shut the doors of the temple. When I was growing up, my next door neighbor had three sons and a daughter. The youngest son was David, and we called him "Pipsqueak" because he was so much smaller than his brothers. They would sometimes provoke David, as brothers will sometimes do. Even though he was younger and smaller, you did not want to get in his way when he was provoked to anger. People that are provoked can be vicious. I have seen wives and husbands that have been provoked, and they can be vicious to one another. The city was provoked and they took hold of Paul and dragged him out of the temple.

(Acts 21:30) "Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut."

They had more intentions than just remove him from the temple. They dragged him out of the temple so they could kill him. They did not want to kill him inside the temple, so they dragged him out of the temple before attempting to kill him. This angry and provoked crowd did not seek truth. They did not seek the facts. They sought to kill Paul. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul tells us that love is not provoked. When husbands and wives become provoked at one another, they are not operating in the Spirit of Christ; they are acting in the flesh. God's will is that we love one another, and love is not provoked. If we are becoming provoked, we need to confess it as sin, and then deal with the underlying issues.

(Acts 21:31a) "While they were seeking to kill him..."

(1 Cor 13:5) "does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take

into account a wrong suffered,”

The accuser of the brethren wants more than to accuse the brethren. John wrote that the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Peter wrote that our “adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” God’s plans for you and I are to give us life, but the devil has come to kill, steal, and destroy. The crowd was not operating by the Holy Spirit, but by the spirit of the world.

God’s will is to give us abundant life.

(John 10:10) “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

(1 Pet 5:8) “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

C. The Intervention by the Commander (vs 31b-36)

It just so happened that while they were seeking to kill Paul, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. It did not just so happen. It was God’s will for Paul to go to Rome. God is going to accomplish what concerns us. God did what was necessary to get the message to the Roman commander in time for him to rescue Paul before he was put to death by the angry mob.

(Acts 21:31) “While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.”

(Ps 138:8) “The LORD will accomplish what concerns me; Your lovingkindness, O LORD, is everlasting; do not forsake the works of Your hands.”

The Roman commander took along some soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. The Jews were beating Paul, and it was urgent for them to get to Paul quickly. The Jews stopped beating Paul when they saw the commander and the soldiers. There were a lot of soldiers. In a Roman cohort, there were ten units. Each unit had six centurians. Each centurian had ten contubernia, and each contubernia had eight soldiers. Therefore, this commander had nearly five thousand soldiers under him. He had sixty centurions under his command. Luke said that he took some centurions. If he took only ten of the sixty with him, he would have had nearly a thousand soldiers with him. He could easily stop any riot or disturbance in the city. The presence of the soldiers stopped the Jews from killing Paul.

(Acts 21:32) “At once he took along some soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.”

The commander came up and took hold of Paul, and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then, he began to ask questions. He wanted to know who Paul was and what he had done. The commander was not able to establish any facts because the crowd was giving conflicting information. The commander had some soldiers carry Paul because of the violence of the mob, and they took him into their barracks. Meanwhile the crowds kept shouting, “Away with him!”

(Acts 21:33-36) "Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he began asking who he was and what he had done. {34} But among the crowd some were shouting one thing and some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. {35} When he got to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; {36} for the multitude of the people kept following them, shouting, "Away with him!"

D. Paul Identifies himself (vs 37-39)

After Paul had been brought into the barracks, he asked the commander for permission to say something to him. The commander was surprised that Paul spoke to him in Greek. He had assumed that he was an Egyptian that had stirred up a previous revolt. The commander gave permission, and Paul identified himself as a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, and that he was a citizen of no insignificant city. Roman citizenship was a very honorable thing. Many people bought their citizenship, but Paul was a born citizen, which was more esteemed. Paul asked the commander for permission to speak to the people.

(Acts 21:37-39) "As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I say something to you?" And he *said, "Do you know Greek? {38} "Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" {39} But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people."

After the commander had given Paul permission, he stood on the stairs, and motioned to the people with his hands. After they quieted down, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect. Next week, Bill will be taking up where we leave

(Acts 21:40) "When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,"

Let's pray.

Introduction (Matt 16:21-23, Acts 19:21)**1. The Prophetic Warnings (vs 1-14)**

- The Holy Spirit was _____ Paul for what he was about to face. (Acts 20:22-23)
 - It was God's _____ for Paul to go to Jerusalem and to suffer there.
 - The Holy Spirit was _____ the will of God to Paul.
- A. The warning at Tyre (vs 1-6) (Acts 19:21, 9:15-16, 23:11)
- Fellowship with the brethren was a _____ for Paul. (Acts 21:4)
 - It was God's will for _____ to suffer. (Luke 9:22, 24:26, 22:41-42)
 - It is God's will for _____ true believers to suffer. (Rom 8:17-18, 2 Cor 1:5, Phil 1:29-30, 1 Pet 2:21)
 - It is God's will for us to suffer for doing what is _____. (1 Pet 2:19-20)
 - The early church was devoted to _____. (Acts 21:5-6)
 - It is God's will for us to _____. (1 Thess 5:16-18)
- B. The warning at Caesarea (vs 7-12) (Acts 6:3, 5)
- C. The will of God be done (vs 13-14)

2. The Plan of the Elders (vs 15-26)

- A. The greeting at Jerusalem (vs 15-19)
- B. The Nazrite vow (vs 20-25) (Numbers 6)
- Good leaders do not just solve problems; they look ahead and mitigate potential risks and _____. (Acts 21:22-25, Pr 3:5-6)
 - God's will for us is _____. (1 Thess 4:1-7)
- C. Paul Heeds their Counsel (vs 26) (Num 6:13-18)

3. Paul's Arrest (vs 27-39)

- A. The False Accusation (vs 27-29) (Rom 9:3, Rev 12:10)
- B. The Crowd Seizes Paul (vs 30-31a) (1 Cor 13:5)
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