



Acts 21

“How to be in God’s Will”

“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace” (Acts 20:22-24).

14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, “**The will of the Lord be done.**”

Acts 21- Was Paul in God’s will or not?—

Don’t go to Jerusalem and he did.

Do the rituals with your Jewish brothers and he did.

Outcome- almost beaten to death.

Ephesians 5:18

Chapter 21

The trip to Jerusalem begins- sailing, finds disciples, told not to go to Jerusalem, prayed on the shore, got in the ship- finished voyage- stayed with Philip the evangelist, Agabus, arrive in Jerusalem, Mnason, goes to see the elders with James, tells of God’s workings, told of a problem-people think he has abandoned the words of Moses, Paul gets purified with four others, enters the temple, an uproar, beaten, carried up the stairs, testifies who he is, asks permission to speak, begins to speak.

1 Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos, the following day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. 3 When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo. 4 **And finding disciples, we stayed there**

seven days. **They told Paul through the Spirit** not to go up to Jerusalem. 5 When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. **And we knelt down on the shore and prayed.** 6 When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home. 7 And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. 8 On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. 10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, **"Thus says the Holy Spirit,** 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' " 12 Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place **pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.** 13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, **"The will of the Lord be done."** 15 And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. 16 Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge. 17 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. 19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; 21 but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. 22 What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. 23 **Therefore do what we tell you:** We have four men who have taken a vow. 24 Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. 25 But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them. 27 Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." 29 (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed

that Paul had brought into the temple.) 30 **And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.** 31 **Now as they were seeking to kill him,** news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. **And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.** 33 Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. 34 And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. 35 When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, “Away with him!” 37 Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, “May I speak to you?” He replied, “Can you speak Greek? 38 Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?” 39 But Paul said, “I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people.” 40 **So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying,**

“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace” (Acts 20:22-24).

14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, **“The will of the Lord be done.”**

Your mission, if you choose to accept it...

John Stott: “Perhaps Luke’s statement is a condensed way of saying that the warning was divine while the urging was human.”

Ill.- Missionary’s chose field because of the climate!

He partnered with them

- ✓ **God’s will involves other believers** verses 4, 7, 8, 16, 17, 18
- ✓ **God’s will involves prayer** verse 5
- ✓ **God’s will gets confirmation** verses 10-12

- ✓ **God's will brings glory to Him** verses 19, 20
- ✓ **God's will involves conflict** verses 30-36
- ✓ **God's will brings divine opportunities** verses 37-40

They pleaded with him- verse 12

He purified with them- verse 26 He did this for the GOSPELS sake, so that he could save as many as he could from every group. Paul did not perform the ritual for HIS sake.

He received permission- verse 39

There is a simple answer which is this: God's will is for everyone to obey His Word. This was His will from the beginning. His perfect will was known to Adam and Eve in everything, and gave one "don't." All through Scripture He tells us what to do and what not to do. He tells us how to live. He gives us the strength to endure hardships, and He brings joy when we walk in His ways. It is wonderful to desire and know God's will. Once you know it, do it!

King David prayed, "(Lord,) teach me to do your will" (Psalm 143:10). **Many pray, "Lord, show me Your will," and then never open up the Bible.** When our hearts are right before Him, He promises to teach us. In teaching us, He gives us understanding. His power is put within us through His Holy Spirit. This is a wonderful truth. God's will is revealed in Scripture and it pleases Him when we desire and do what He instructs. "The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17, ESV).

To those who truly seek God's will, the key is to become more and more like Christ. If we are ignorant of God's Word, we will always be ignorant of God's will. When we are at a point of decision about choices in life, and it is not contrary to God's Word, start moving in that direction. Ask Him to close doors and open others. What grieves the heart of God is when we deliberately make a choice that is in conflict with His truth. God will never—never—lead us to do something that is contrary to His written Word.- Billy Graham

Ill.- led a married man to meet a woman so he could divorce his wife!!

So, then, how can we know God's plan for our lives? 8 vital keys to knowing God's will and plan for your life. Here they are:

1. Walk with God.

For starters, if you are interested in knowing God's will and plan for your life, then you must learn to walk with God. You need to develop a relationship with Him. Christianity is all about relationship rather than just religion.

And so you must cultivate your relationship with God. You must seek to know Him and not just seek to know about Him.

You will cultivate that relationship best by spending time in His Word, taking time for prayer, and taking every opportunity you can to be involved in church and small group Bible study opportunities. When you seek these disciplines in your life, God will begin the first steps to revealing His plan to you.

Proverbs 3:5-6 - 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

2. Surrender your will to God's.

Many times when we say we are seeking God's will, what we are really wanting to say to God is this: "OK, God, here's what I'm planning to do. Now I need you to rubber stamp this, all right?" I must tell you that this is not really effective in finding His true will.

Before God will begin to reveal His will to you, you must be committed to doing whatever it is that He desires for you to do. God will likely be slow to show you His plan if He knows you will likely not do that plan anyway.

"Be thankful for what you have, and willing to want what He is not willing to give"- Christian's Legacy- 1893

"I always get what I want" in context to Psalm 37:4

Romans 12:1-2 - 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Jesus was willing to die for us, so shouldn't we be willing to live for Him? When we surrender to Him, that is when He really begins to direct our steps.

3. Obey what you already know to be God's Will.

Many people seem to want to know what God's plan is for their lives, but they overlook the fact that **98% of His will is already delineated carefully through His Word**. God is very clear about many, many aspects of His will. For instance, it is clearly His plan that we abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

If we do not obey the things that God has shown us clearly to be His will, why would we think He would reveal any further information regarding His plan for our lives? Obedience is an important first step.

4. Seek godly input.

One key component to finding God's will is to seek the input of godly advisors in your life. It is important to have in your life godly mentors to help you. Do you?

Think of it this way: you should understand that **you are basically a composite of the five people you spend the most time with.** So, then, it is vital that you choose those five people well. If you choose to surround yourself with godly advisors (not just Christians!) **(People love to say they are getting counsel from a Christian!),** they will be instrumental in helping you discern God's plan for your life. But if you surround yourself with people who are far from God, your hope of finding His best for your life will be greatly diminished.

Proverbs 11:14 – Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

The church is designed to help you greatly with this. The more you involve yourself with a community of believers, the greater your chances will be of finding godly men and women who can help you discern God's will.

5. Pay attention to how God has wired you.

God has created you to fulfill a specific role in this world. There is no one else who can achieve completely what God has purposely created you to do.

The Apostle Peter gives us this admonition:

1 Peter 4:10 - As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

God has gifted every one of us to perform a special mission for which we alone were created. How amazing is that? Wow!

So, when you seek to discover God's will for your life, pay attention to how He has gifted you. His plan for you will always be directly related to the gifts that He has bestowed upon you. The great news is that you will automatically be good at whatever it is that He has called you to do!

6. Listen to God's Spirit.

III. “I experienced a major turning point in my own prayer life when I learned simply to shut up while I was praying. That may sound odd to you, and it seemed odd to me at first.”

Bill Hybel’s book, *Too Busy Not to Pray*

Since reading that book, I have added a significant component to my prayer life: listening. I take time to listen to what God might have to say to me.

“What is the next step in my career?”

“What is the next step in my ministry?”

“What is the next step for my family?”

“What is the next step for my marriage?”

“What is the next step in my education?”

“What is the next step in my finances?”

During my prayer time, I meditate on questions such as the above. Often, God will start flooding my heart with ideas and information regarding one or more of those questions. I write as fast as I can as He speaks to my heart. What a glorious experience that is to sense His Spirit on me, guiding my thoughts and words.

Through experiences like this, He has shown me many times with great clarity what His will is for my life. I long for those experiences when He speaks to me like that. Those times are truly life changing.

John 10:27 – My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

7. Listen to the desires of your heart.

Psalms 37:4-5 - 4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. (NKJV)

I love this passage, because it shows me that, when I am walking with the Lord, He will actually let me do many really cool things that I actually love to do! When you are close to Him, He actually begins to shape your desires so that you desire the things that He has already called you to do.

So then, His plan actually becomes a super-exciting adventure. I always have the most fun in life when I am doing God’s will. And that is because He shapes my “wanter” to want to do the things for which He has actually created me.

8. Take a look at your circumstances.

God often clearly demonstrates His plan for our lives by lining up circumstances in obvious ways. And He also shows us what His will is NOT for us to do in that same way.

Acts 16:6-10

6 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

So, even Paul had to face closed doors in his ministry. God often uses closed doors to show us clearly what He does NOT want us to do. And He also uses open doors at times to show us what He DOES want us to do. Of course, this does not mean that every open door is definitely God's plan, but it does help to give you some basic direction.

Acts 21- Paul walking in God's will for his life and finds himself in a position to share the life changing power of the Gospel in chapter 22. Next week!