

The Apostle Paul's Resolve and Ours

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Text: Acts 21:1–16

Introduction

“whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” — [1 Cor. 10:31](#)

- We know the Apostle Paul was a sinner and we know that he wasn't perfect either.
- But I think you would likely agree--he was a compelling example of what it means to live for Christ's glory—which is something God calls all of us to do— not just apostles.

*“he [that is Christ] died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but **for him** who for their sake died and was raised.”* — [2 Cor.5:15](#)

- Christ redeemed us, with his blood for Him — that is for Himself and for His own glory.
- And for Paul, all-consuming passion and ambition to live for Christ's glory, compelled him to obey Christ — even when such obedience proved costly and painful.
- Our narrative today bears this out.

Main Theme: Passionate ambition for Christ's glory produces costly obedience.

The Context

- The Apostle Paul's Third Missionary Journey has just recently concluded and we find him, on his way, travelling to Jerusalem.
- Back in [Acts 19](#) we read....“Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem...”
- In last week's passage, [Acts 20:22-23](#) —Paul declared : “And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.”
- In the events that follow, that come after our text today----Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and taken into Roman custody.
- The Apostle was eventually brought to Rome, where he was under house arrest awaiting trial before Caesar.

A Matter of Obedience

- In our passage today, [Acts 21](#) — constrained by the Holy Spirit, Paul made his way to Jerusalem — and he did so knowing full well that imprisonment and afflictions awaited him.

- The word translated constrained in the original language can also be translated "bound" — like being bound by a chain to something. So Paul was “bound by the Spirit.”
- In other words, the Holy Spirit made it perfectly clear to Paul — that as a matter of obedience-- he must go to Jerusalem
- This reminds us of someone else who headed towards Jerusalem, in obedience to God, knowing full well that affliction awaited him there.
- In [Luke 9](#) we read of our Lord that -“When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

Test #1: Tyre

- During his time with the Christians in Tyre, we read

[Acts 21:4](#) “ **through the Spirit** they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.”

- The bottom line is, Paul believed this prophecy was off in some way otherwise he wouldn't have disobeyed it.
- He was constrained by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem. And so he continued on his journey.
- This was a significant test for Paul! Friends are saying 'Brother Paul, we believe God doesn't want you to go.'
- The question was, how committed was Paul to obeying God? How committed was He to obeying the Word God had given him?
- In Tyre, Paul did well and continued on his journey. How would he do when the pressure became even more intense?

Test #2: Caesarea

- Agabus - a proven prophet prophesied over Paul in Caesarea.

[Acts 21:11](#) *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.’”*

[Acts 21:12](#) “When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem.”

- Agabus prophesied and then it appears everyone—the believers in Caesarea--Paul's travelling companions including Luke—everyone was convinced that Paul should not go to Jerusalem....so they ganged up on Paul as it were, pressing Paul not to continue on.
- Paul's friends were weeping. Paul says vs.13 “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart?”
- The word in the original language translated "breaking" —means literally “to break in pieces, to crush”

- The sense is, that these friends surrounding Paul, pleading with him through tears not to go to Jerusalem --was overwhelming to Paul emotionally. These dear brothers and sisters Paul loved were breaking his heart with their emotional appeal.
- The pressure on Paul at this point was extremely intense.

Acts 21:13 “Then 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.””

- Again this was a real test for Paul. Would he obey God or not?
- Here we gain insight into Paul’s main purpose and ambition in life. What was it? The glory of His Savior Jesus! Nothing mattered to Paul more than glorifying the name of Jesus!

“For Paul, the glory of the name of Jesus and his reputation in the world were more important than life.” — John Piper

- What motivated Paul to go to Jerusalem in spite of the danger that awaited him? The glory of Christ; the reputation of Christ was more important to him than even preserving his own life.

Conclusion

Main Theme: Passionate ambition for Christ’s glory produces costly obedience.

- Some of you are in place right now where obedience to Christ is **costly**. You are in that place of **testing**. You know what obedience requires, yet you also know that obedience requires something that does not come easily to any of us — **death to self**— and death to self can be very painful.

“For Paul, the glory of the name of Jesus and his reputation in the world were more important than life.” — John Piper

- *A question that is worth prayerful consideration:* Is the glory of the name of Jesus and his reputation in the world more important than life itself— TO YOU?
- If Christ’s glory is truly your main ambition in life—> It will show. How will it show? It will show in your obedience to your Savior—especially when that obedience costs you something...
- May we all seek forgiveness and cleansing at the foot of the cross for where we have failed to glorify him by obeying him. Praise the Lord that when we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness
- May we also seek renewed strength from above to walk in obedience daily, for His glory and namesake.

Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Re-read the text, Acts 21. What initial observations and insights do you have from reading this text?

- The main theme of the sermon was "Passionate ambition for Christ's glory produces costly obedience." Re-read Acts 21:13. What does this verse show that Paul was most passionate about?
- Paul was passionate about God's glory. How is his passion for Christ's glory seen in this passage?
- What would be some of the identifying markers in a person's life that their greatest desire in life is to bring Christ glory? How is the believer's obedience connected to a desire to see Christ glorified?
- What passions/desires tend to compete the most in our hearts with a passion for Christ's glory?
- How can we cultivate increased passion in our hearts for the glory of Christ? Do you think meditating on the glory of our salvation might help? If so, how?
- Consider taking time to pray, asking God by His Holy Spirit to increase our desire to live for Christ's glory.