



Sermon Series Notes

"Suffering & the Will of God" (Acts 21)

Danny Hodges - NT3644

21:4 The Holy Spirit reveals to these disciples the same thing he was revealing to Paul regarding future suffering for Christ's sake. See Acts 20:22-23. God told Paul in the very beginning how much he would have to suffer in the will of God.

Acts 9:16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.

See II Cor.11:23-29

21:9 I Cor.14: 3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

If anyone needed encouragement at this point, it was Paul! He is headed for more "prison and hardships." No doubt Philip's four daughters ministered to him.

21:10-11 Agabus was the prophet in Acts 11:27-30 that predicted a coming famine. Did Agabus come all the way from Judea just to give Paul this message?

21:12-14 Has anyone ever tried to dissuade you not to do something that was certain to bring you trouble or pain (because they loved you and were concerned for your well being)? Luke and Paul's entire ministry team is trying to talk him out of going to Jerusalem. Despite everyone's attempt to dissuade him, Paul is determined to make the trip.

21:20-25 For the sake of his ministry to the Gentiles, Paul was not always a kosher Jew (I Cor.9:19-23). He had come to understand that no one would be justified before God by keeping the Law (Col.2:16-17). He knew that circumcision was only a sign of a greater truth, circumcision of the heart (Rom.2:29). But for many Jewish disciples of Christ it was extremely difficult to embrace all these practical truths of the New Covenant.

21:26 In order to keep peace, Paul agrees to the request by the Jerusalem church elders.

21:27-29 The religious politics did not work! And what is amazing to me is God uses this whole scenario to work out His perfect will for the apostle Paul.

21:30-36 So all the warnings about what would happen if Paul went to Jerusalem are beginning to come true. And when word reached the ears of all who had warned him, there must have been a variety of emotions and reactions. Many would immediately think, "I told him so," or "He should have listened to us." There would be emotions of grief and deep concern, but also of anger at Paul's stubborn determination to go to Jerusalem. And who are these people who had adamantly attempted to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem? They are fellow disciples, ministry associates, even close friends.

Paul, knowing God's will for his life, would not allow fellow disciples, ministry associates, even close friends to deter him.

Do you remember when Peter tried to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross? See Matt.16:21-24.

Sometimes we are wrong in attempting to dissuade someone to follow a path that will certainly involve suffering, even potential death.

Peter wasn't the only one who attempted to deter Jesus from the will of the Father. See John 11:6-16. Meaning of vv.9-10, a person walking by the light is a person walking in the will of God. A person walking in the darkness is a person not walking in the will of God. And what happens to the one walking in darkness? They stumble.

If these disciples were going to continue to follow Jesus (walk in the will of God), they would have to be willing to die with him.

I have seen parents, friends, family members, spouses, deter or at least attempt to deter those they love from the will of God. Parents who are concerned about their child going on that short term cross-cultural mission trip. Loved ones who don't understand a couple taking their young children to live in a dangerous and uncomfortable part of the world for the sake of the gospel.

They may get sick, they may suffer, and yes, they may die. ***But to die for the cause of Christ and in the will of God is to live, and to live for only the comforts & pleasures of this world outside the will of God, is to die.***

See Matthew 16:24-25 (note context)

I Tim.5:6...the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

See Eph.2:1-2

Don't let anyone dissuade you from a path that you know is God's will for your life, no matter the cost.

See I Cor.2:14-15; If even those with the Spirit at times attempt to deter us from God's will (Acts 21:12-14, Matt.16, John 11), we should not be at all surprised when those without the Spirit do not understand.

See Luke 9:51; Jesus never let the threat of suffering or the fear of death keep Him from the Father's will, and if we are to follow Him, we must have that same attitude. And he did not allow anyone to deter him.

Now, I want us to understand something that I think is so cool. Once we determine that we will follow Jesus, even if it means suffering, or death, no one can touch us unless the Father grants them permission

to do so. Jesus said to Pilate, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from heaven." Satan could not touch Job apart from God's permissive will.

Watch what happens with Paul, and how God works it all out to fulfill His will in Paul's life.

Summarize 21:37-22:22; This all leads to a plot to kill Paul, something this mob would have already done except for the Roman soldiers saving his life (21:22). The conspirators are in league with the Jewish chief priests and elders, but just "by chance" Paul's nephew learns of this plot. He tells Uncle Paul, who directs him to tell the Roman centurion. Read Acts 23:22-24. What was that last line (v.24b)? This was the equivalent of a limo, or better yet, a government issued bullet proof SUV along with a heavily armed escort!

Paul is guarded by the "enemy," even escorted by "the enemy" into the courts of the "kings" of the Gentiles.

Acts 9:15...This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles ***and their kings...***

Paul would soon stand and share the gospel before Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and ultimately Caesar himself.

Phil.1:12-14 Now I want you to know, brothers sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

Phil.4:22 All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

The path for Paul to get the gospel to kings of the Gentiles was one that inevitably brought pain and suffering. But oh the wisdom of God in how he outsmarts the enemy!

The cross was the ultimate example of how God used suffering to fulfill His will & outsmart the enemy.

I Cor.2:6-8 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that god destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for ***if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.***

In order to understand and accept God's will for Paul going to Jerusalem, we must first understand and accept the wisdom of the cross.

It was the path of suffering that placed Joseph in the center of God's will for his life. Joseph is given a dream from the Lord regarding his glorious future, but Joseph is not told of the years of suffering that would eventually lead to that glory. Paul was not surprised by the events that unfolded in Jerusalem, because he had been repeatedly warned that prison and hardships were coming. But Joseph must have been shocked when he found himself bound and headed toward Egypt! Once in Egypt, now a slave owned by a man named Potiphar, Joseph continued to suffer for doing what was right. He repeatedly resisted his master's wife's attempts to seduce him, then she lied and said he tried to rape her. As a result, Potiphar threw Joseph into prison. In prison God used him to be a tremendous witness to other prisoners, only to be forgotten by the one he helped the most. But through all the suffering, God fulfilled His will in and

through Joseph's life. And Joseph finally understood that all of the pain he had endured was part of God's will. See Gen.45:3-8a. Joseph had not suffered simply for the sake of suffering. Joseph had suffered for Israel, and for Egypt (the world). Joseph had suffered for a lost world. Joseph is what we call a "type" of the Lord Jesus.

Cross: A trial or affliction.

Sometimes the trial or affliction is at work, sometimes at home, & sometimes both! See I Peter 2:12-3:7; I Cor.7:16.

Advantages of suffering in the will of God

- May be used to advance the gospel
 - Phil.1:12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.
 - Gal.4:13 As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.
 - Acts 8:1, 4 Stephen's witness to Saul of Tarsus
- It proves our genuineness as children of God.
 - Rom.8: 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.
 - I Peter 1: 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- It is part of our fellowship with Christ.
 - Phil.3: 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...
- It brings blessing from heaven.
 - I Peter 4: 13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.
- Produces perseverance.

- Rom.5: 3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;
4 perseverance, character; and character, hope.
- Perseverance yields maturity
 - James 1: 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
- Maturity yields a steadfast commitment
 - I Peter 4:1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. 2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

If one has never suffered for the will of God, it means they are not living in the will of God.

Every **committed** Christian will suffer for Christ's sake.

II Tim.3:12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Philippians 1:29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.

CONCLUSION

“To choose to suffer means something is wrong; to choose God's will even if it means suffering is a very different thing. No healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not.” (Oswald Chambers).

Have you dissuaded or attempted to dissuade someone from taking a path that avoids pain, sacrifice, suffering, even potential death? It could be you are allowing yourself to be used by Satan to be a stumbling block for the will of God to be fulfilled in that person's life.

Have you allowed someone to dissuade you from a path that would involve pain, sacrifice, suffering, even potential death, for Christ's sake? If you have, the good news is you can repent, take up your cross today, and once again follow Jesus.

On Jan.8, 1956 Jim Elliot & four other missionaries were killed by the very people they were trying to reach for Christ, the then cannibalistic Auca Indians of Ecuador. But their deaths opened the door for many Aucas to become Christians. The Aucas are today a peaceful tribe. Not only that, but Jim Elliot's death has probably inspired more people to go to other countries to share the love of Jesus than he could ever have inspired in life. He made a statement that has now become famous:

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

