

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

BACK TO THE BOOK OF ACTS (BBA)

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JOHN S. TORELL

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PART 43: CAVING IN TO CHURCH POLITICS

We are now going to study chapter 21 of the Book of Acts and look at a weakness in Paul. For a number of years he had had nothing but heavy resistance from the unsaved Jews and Gentiles. He went to Jerusalem to meet with the leadership of the apostolic church, but instead of getting a warm welcome, he was accused of not being Jewish enough. The compromise Paul made in Jerusalem would alter the rest of his life and cause him even more suffering.

THE TRIP BACK TO JERUSALEM

Luke describes how they traveled hugging the coast of the province Asia which today is part of Turkey. The last city they left in Asia was Patara, and from this city the ship was turned away from the coast on a path that would take them south of Cyprus and then directly to the city of Tyre, which at that time was part of Syria. Today this city is part of Lebanon. **Acts 21:1-3**

Paul and his travel party stayed in Tyre for seven days and met with other believers in Christ. The Holy Spirit spoke again through the believers that Paul should not go to Jerusalem (**verse 4**). The previous time was in **Acts 20:22-25**

Paul did not heed the warning again but was determined to travel to Jerusalem. The local church had a farewell party for him. **verses 5-6**

Next they traveled by ship following the coastline until they came to the large seaport of Caesarea which was on the coast of the province Galilee. **verses 7-8**

WAS PAUL IN GOD'S WILL?

God is not the author of confusion. The Holy Spirit does not bring confusion. Paul later made this statement concerning confusion. **1 Corinthians 14:29-33**

On his early missionary journey's, the Holy Spirit twice hindered Paul from going in a certain direction. **Acts 16:6-7**

Once Paul had made up his mind to travel back to Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit used a number of believers in different places to warn Paul about going to Jerusalem. Then came a strong warning that should have been taken seriously but he was stubborn and refused to heed the warning. **Acts 21:8-11**

Luke and the rest of the team all agreed that Paul should abandon the trip to Jerusalem. **verse 12**

I do not believe that it was God's perfect will for Paul to travel to Jerusalem! Here are my reasons:



1. I have heard people say that God wanted Paul to travel to Rome, therefore, Paul had to go to Jerusalem to be arrested and later be shipped to Rome. I do not accept this argument because there was no need for God to have Paul dragged to Rome as a prisoner.
2. At the time of Paul's journey to Jerusalem there already was a strong church in Rome. Paul's letter to the Romans, which was written around 52-53 A.D. when he was in Corinth, tells us this. **Romans 1:1-13**
3. The Apostolic church in Jerusalem was already established and there was no need for Paul to go to Jerusalem to preach. God had driven out most of the Christians from Jerusalem a few years earlier and established a strong mission oriented church in Antioch where Paul became a member after his conversion. Paul/Saul had been the instrument in this action. **Acts 8:1-4; 13:1-3**
4. God knew in advance that Jerusalem would be destroyed in 70 A.D. The remaining Christians in Jerusalem fled when the Roman army came around 69 A.D.
5. Paul spent two years locked up in Caesarea when he could have been preaching and teaching. **Acts 24:23-27**
6. Paul spent another two years locked up in Rome making it a total of four years lost sitting in jail. **Acts 28:30-31**

GOD WORKS OUT ALL THINGS FOR GOOD

The Holy Spirit gave the Paul tremendous spiritual insight. While he was in Corinth, prior to his trip back to Jerusalem, Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans. Paul was given the revelation when it comes to God's will for our lives in that God is sovereign and He will impose his will in the end upon every believer in Christ. **Romans 8:26-31**

Even if it was not God's will for Paul to travel to Jerusalem, He still picked up the pieces and protected Paul from being killed first in Jerusalem and later when he was shipwrecked on the way to Rome as a prisoner.

Just because God in His grace will reach down and save a person who is out of His will doesn't mean that this is God's perfect will.

Let's say a person gets drunk, drives a car and kills someone. While serving time in prison the drunk driver gets saved.

It was not God's will for the person to get drunk, kill a person, and end up in prison so that God could save him. God saved the person despite the fact that he got drunk and became a murderer.

However, the drunk driver is still responsible for his actions and will have to face the consequences of his actions. **Galatians 6:7-8**

WHAT MOVED PAUL TO TRAVEL TO JERUSALEM?

Luke does not give us any insight in this matter and Paul never discussed it in any writing that was left behind. It will be a secret that will be unveiled at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But by looking at all the writings of Paul, I have come to the following conclusion:

1. Paul had a need to be recognized by the leadership in the Christian Church. He was very emotional about it which meant that he was no longer thinking rationally. His recorded reaction by Luke shows this to be true. **Acts 21:13-14**
2. Upon his arrival in Jerusalem, Paul looked up the leadership in the church and told them how God had used him with the Gentiles. **verses 15-19**
3. They were not too impressed with his work among the Gentiles; instead, they were more concerned about the opinion of Jewish believers in Jerusalem. **verses 20-25**
4. Instead of standing up to James and the rest of the leadership like he had done in Antioch (**Galatians 2:9-21**), Paul caved in and agreed to go back again under the sacrificial law, essentially proclaiming that the **finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross** was not enough. **Acts 21:26**

Paul was out of the will of God when he traveled to Jerusalem. The Jewish temple work he tried to do was destroyed and he was disgraced and thrown out of the temple.

Instead of being honored by the Jews in Jerusalem, he was dishonored. **verses 27-30**

What can we learn from this? Compromise always leads to defeat; there is never any victory in compromise. A person who compromises will be despised by all people, including God! Matthew 6:24

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

DO YOU HAVE AN EAR TO HEAR WITH?