

## SERMON NOTES

SERIES:       **Acts: To Be Continued**  
TITLE:         **Understanding God's Will**  
DATE:         March 6, 2016  
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In Acts, Luke shows Jesus' friends continuing the kingdom mission that Jesus started in his earthly life and ministry. The Book of Acts is all about Jesus' followers continuing his mission in the world. We are the ones God has entrusted with carrying the message of Jesus forward.

**Today, we look at Acts 21:1-16.** In this passage, we see how Paul formally wraps up his last missionary journey. In and around that, Luke gives us a snapshot of Paul and his friends wrestling with the idea of God's will.

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**God's will:** *How do we discern it? How do we both understand and "live in" God's will with confidence?*

- "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances; for **this is God's will for you** in Christ Jesus." –1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
- "**This is God's will for you**—your holiness—that you abstain from sexual immorality." –1 Thessalonians 4:3
- "**Understand what the will of the Lord is.**" –Ephesians 5:17

In Acts 21, Paul is advised—by friends who were prompted "through the Spirit"—*not to go* to Jerusalem (verse 4). However, Paul felt "constrained by the Spirit" (Acts 20:22) *to go* to Jerusalem. This did not cause a big fight, for they departed peacefully (21:5-6), but Paul continues on to Jerusalem.

Before Paul makes it to Jerusalem, he stops in Caesarea and is once again urged *not to go* to Jerusalem by trustworthy believers. He gracefully disagrees and asks only that "the will of God be done" (verse 14).

Is God confused? Are we? No. The pattern indicates that the Spirit repeatedly showed people that Paul *would suffer* in Jerusalem. People were concerned for his safety and thus urged him not to go. **Obedience to God's will should not first consider your level of comfort.**

We should desire and pursue clarity as it concerns God's will, but we should never want so much clarity that it causes us to not trust him anymore. **God, grant me clarity, but not at the expense of faith.** God's will is that we are ever-dependent on him.

Paul plainly understanding God's will doesn't get in the way of his trusting God. **Comfort and clarity can both be gifts from God, but they can also evolve to be enemies of faith if we're not careful.**

Jesus obeyed his Father perfectly, and in Jesus, God's kingdom comes and God's will is done. But, it wasn't always comfortable for Jesus. **God's will is most clearly understood and obeyed in and because of Jesus.** His will is never more visible and tangible and obvious than when we're looking at Jesus.

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#### For Discussion:

1. Obedience to God's will should not first consider your level of comfort. Does this change the way you think about 'knowing God's will' for any particular issue in your life?
2. Do you too often and too quickly think about whether or not the ease of your life will be infringed upon if you step out in faith and obedience to God's will?
3. When thinking about specific situations that currently worry you, how does it change your perspective to ask the following questions?
  - Will it make me more like Jesus?
  - Will it make me love him more?
  - Will it put him on display?
  - Will it point to the forgiveness of the cross and the hope of the resurrection?
  - Will it cause me to live more sacrificially, like Jesus?
  - Will it cause me to more intentionally carry his mission forward, like Paul when he said he was even ready to die for the name of Jesus?