

Small Group Questions | November 18th, 2018

Called to Explore — To the End of the Earth

Acts 21:1–16

Other Passages to Reference: Acts 20:22–24; Luke 9:51; Matt 16:21–23; Mat 20:17–19; Matt 26:36–39; Isaiah 49:6–7

Introductory Comments to Group Leaders:

This week's sermon considered how the Holy Spirit took Paul back through Jerusalem as a means to send the gospel farther toward the end of the earth. I encourage you to go deeper into the parallels between Paul's and Jesus' final trips to Jerusalem with both knowing ahead of time that suffering and difficulties lay ahead of them but going anyway. Call attention to our natural tendency to assume that if we know danger lies ahead, that path must not be God's will for us. Both Paul's and Jesus' examples teach us otherwise. As we look at passages leading up to Paul's and Jesus' final journeys through Jerusalem we'll see similar "Gethsemane" experiences. We'll want to make sure to get to the application of "What excuses might we be making that keep us from ceasing and saying, 'Let the will of the Lord be done even if it costs us everything so that the gospel makes it to those who have not heard.'"

Again this week, I put some answers to the questions and commentary in bold text at the bottom of this document. The numbers correspond to the numbers of the questions. Please refer to those answers after you have delved into the text on your own.

Sermon Recap: In Acts 1:8 Jesus calls His disciples to explore, to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth. What is the end of the earth? The end of the earth represents wherever Jesus has us when we cease and say, "Let the will of the Lord be done." (Acts 21:14). For Paul, the end of the earth took him back through Jerusalem. Paul was actually joining Jesus who had already gone to the end of the earth by way of Jerusalem to reach us. The end of the earth was always the destination and Jerusalem was always the path. In response to Commitment Sunday, 2018, will we, everyone together, cease and say, "Let the will of the Lord be done in our lives in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth?"

Hook: A Question to Help Ignite Conversation

What is the farthest place from here you have traveled? (It would be good to go around and ask each person in the group to answer the question.)

Look:

Read Acts 20:22–25, 36–38; and Acts 21:1–16

1. List the different mentions of the Spirit's warnings about what awaited Paul if he continued to Jerusalem.
2. When the people heard these warnings they were understandably concerned. Most interpreted the warnings as God directing Paul not to go to Jerusalem. However, Paul saw the warnings as predictions preparing him for God's plan. It's natural, but not always correct, to assume, "If you know bad things are going to happen to you if you do something, then God must not want you to do it." What made going to Jerusalem worth suffering the predicted afflictions for Paul?
3. What did the people do when they saw that Paul would not be dissuaded? (Acts 21:14) (We'll come back to this thought in the application section.)
4. Can we recall how the things the Spirit warned of came true after Paul went to Jerusalem?

Read in order: Matt 16:21–24 (1st Warning & Peter's Reaction); Matt 17: 22–23 (2nd warning); Luke 9:51 (Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem); Matt 20:17–19 (Third Warning); Matt 26:36–39 (Gethsemane)

5. What parallels do you see between Jesus relentlessly heading toward Jerusalem for the last time and Paul's last trip to Jerusalem?

Illustrations:

Illustrations and quotes can be found on the "Sermon Slides" link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org

Took: *Applying the message to our lives.*

Practical Applications:

1. Is there anything in your life that causes you to be unwilling to share the gospel wherever Jesus might send you?
2. Have you had a personal "Gethsemane" experience of asking God to take away impending affliction before surrendering with "Not my will but Your will be done"?
3. Last week we prayed for the persecuted church where people suffer and sometimes die for their faith. What excuses do you need to stop making in order to honestly say, "Let the will of the Lord be done, I surrender even if being Jesus' witness brings affliction or costs me my life"?

Verse (You might consider memorizing this one): " But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." – Acts 20:24

Prayer:

- Pray for one another's requests.
- Please pray for our ICM ministry partners in Thailand and the people to whom they are ministering.
- Perhaps your small group would like to go as a group to pray with Doug Bunn and the team at East Side Church at one of their regular prayer gatherings.

What we hope members glean from the passage.

1. Paul told the Ephesian elders that the Spirit had warned him of afflictions and imprisonment; believers at Tyre were inspired by the Holy Spirit and warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem; the Prophet Agabus did not try to persuade Paul not to go, but Agabus did let Paul know more specifics about what would happen to Paul in Jerusalem.
2. Paul wanted to complete the mission Christ had assigned to him to "testify to the gospel of the grace of the Lord" (Acts 20:24). He was willing "not only to be imprisoned but to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13).
3. They "ceased and said, 'Let the will of the Lord be done.'"
4. Angry Jewish people dragged Paul out of the temple, beating and seeking to kill him. In the midst of the turmoil, Roman soldiers arrested Paul, which essentially amounted to a rescue. Paul had to testify before various regional leaders and kings before eventually being sent to Rome to appear before Caesar.
5. Parallels—both Jesus and Paul knew of dangers that would befall them in going to Jerusalem and they warned those close to them beforehand so they would know it was part of God's plan. Those close to Jesus and to Paul tried to dissuade them from putting themselves in danger. Both Paul and Jesus were to be handed over to Gentiles. Paul's time with those trying to dissuade him has been called his Gethsemane, comparing it to Jesus praying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will" (Matt 26:39)