

Acts 29 – Week 8 – Fixed on Jerusalem – Bible Study Helps

Sermon Summary: This sermon explores Paul's final journey to Jerusalem, focusing on his steadfast determination to fulfill God's calling despite numerous warnings of impending danger. It emphasizes the importance of following God's will, even when it conflicts with human wisdom or advice. The sermon also highlights the challenges faced by early Christian leaders in balancing Jewish traditions with the new covenant in Christ.

Key Points:

- Paul's resolve to go to Jerusalem despite multiple warnings of trouble
- The importance of following God's leading, even when others advise against it
- Paul's willingness to accommodate Jewish customs to avoid unnecessary conflict
- The value of giving one's all for the Gospel, even in the face of persecution
- The power of simple, direct approaches in sharing the Gospel message

Scripture Reference:

- Acts 20-21

Stories:

- Paul's emotional farewell to the Ephesian elders
- The prophet Agabus binding himself with Paul's belt to illustrate coming persecution
- Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and his request to address the crowd
- Evangelism at a mall, illustrating the effectiveness of direct communication
- The story of Tom O'Dell's determination to raise funds for an orphanage despite health challenges

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Discipleship and Small Group Guide: Acts 20-21 - Paul's Journey to Jerusalem

Opening Prayer

Key Takeaways:

1. Paul's unwavering commitment to preach the gospel, even in the face of danger
2. The importance of investing in and warning church leaders
3. Balancing personal convictions with sensitivity to others' concerns
4. God's ability to open doors for ministry in unexpected circumstances

Discussion Questions:

1. Paul was repeatedly warned about the dangers awaiting him in Jerusalem, yet he remained determined to go. How do we discern between godly warnings and our personal convictions?
2. In Acts 20:24, Paul says, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself." How can we cultivate this level of devotion to Christ and His mission in our own lives?
3. Paul invested heavily in the Ephesian elders, warning them day and night with tears (Acts 20:31). How can we be more intentional about mentoring and warning others in the faith?
4. The sermon mentions the balance between following God's leading and considering others' counsel. How do we navigate this tension in our own decision-making processes?
5. Paul was willing to participate in Jewish customs (Acts 21:26) to avoid offending others, even though he didn't believe these were necessary for salvation. In what areas of our lives might we need to exercise similar flexibility for the sake of the gospel?
6. Despite the chaos and danger, Paul found an opportunity to share his testimony (Acts 21:39-40). How can we be more alert to unexpected opportunities to share the gospel in our daily lives?

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Practical Applications:

1. This week, intentionally seek out someone you can disciple or encourage in their faith journey.
2. Reflect on areas where you might be holding back in your commitment to Christ. Pray for courage to fully surrender those areas.
3. Practice asking simple, direct questions to open up spiritual conversations, just as Paul did with the Roman captain.
4. Identify a personal liberty you might need to set aside temporarily for the sake of not offending others or hindering the gospel.
5. Share with the group next week about any unexpected opportunities you had to share your faith or encourage others spiritually.

Closing Prayer

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Discipleship Questions

How does Paul's willingness to face danger in Jerusalem challenge our own commitment to following God's calling, even when it's difficult or dangerous?

In what ways might we, like the Ephesian elders, become overly focused on potential threats to the church while losing sight of our 'first love' for Christ?

How can we balance Paul's example of cultural sensitivity (participating in Jewish purification rites) with his unwavering commitment to the gospel message?

What can we learn from Paul's approach to addressing hostile crowds, and how might we apply this in our own interactions with those who oppose our faith?

How does Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesian elders challenge our own approach to ministry and discipleship?

In what ways might God be calling us to 'walk alone' like Paul did, and how can we prepare ourselves for such seasons?

How can we discern between well-meaning advice from fellow believers and God's specific calling for our lives, especially when they seem to conflict?

What lessons can we draw from Paul's ability to seize unexpected opportunities to share the gospel, even in the midst of persecution?

How does Paul's example challenge our understanding of Christian leadership and the responsibilities of those who shepherd God's flock?

In what ways might we be holding onto religious traditions or cultural practices that could be hindering the spread of the gospel or unity in the church?

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A 5-day Bible reading plan and devotional guide

Day 1: Unwavering Faith in God's Plan

Reading: Acts 20:22-24

Devotional: Paul's unwavering commitment to God's calling, even in the face of impending danger, challenges us to examine our own faith. Despite numerous warnings about the troubles awaiting him in Jerusalem, Paul remained resolute, declaring, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy..." This steadfast dedication reminds us that true faith often requires us to step out of our comfort zones and trust God's plan, even when it seems risky or illogical to others. Reflect on areas in your life where God might be calling you to take a leap of faith. How can you cultivate a spirit of courage and obedience like Paul's?

Day 2: The Power of a Christ-Centered Life

Reading: Acts 20:17-21

Devotional: Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders provides a powerful example of a life fully devoted to Christ. He reminds them of his conduct - serving the Lord with humility, enduring trials, and never hesitating to preach the full gospel message. This testimony challenges us to examine our own lives. Are we living in a way that clearly demonstrates our faith to others? Paul's life was an open book, marked by consistency in public and private. Today, consider how you can more fully align your actions with your beliefs, both in your personal life and in your interactions with others. What changes might you need to make to ensure your life is a clear testimony of Christ's transforming power?

Day 3: Guarding Against Spiritual Dangers

Reading: Acts 20:28-31

Devotional: Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders about "grievous wolves" that would infiltrate the church serves as a sobering reminder of the need for spiritual vigilance. In our modern context, these "wolves" might take the form of false teachings, compromising values, or anything that draws us away from the pure gospel of Christ. Paul's exhortation to "watch" calls us to actively protect our faith and the faith of those around us. Today, reflect on areas in your spiritual life where you might have become complacent. How can you cultivate a more discerning spirit? Consider implementing regular practices of Bible study, prayer, and accountability to strengthen your spiritual defenses.

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Day 4: The Joy of Selfless Service

Reading: Acts 20:32-35

Devotional: Paul's reminder of Jesus' words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," encapsulates a fundamental principle of Christian living. Throughout his ministry, Paul exemplified this selfless attitude, working with his own hands to support himself and others. This challenges our often self-centered approach to life and ministry. Today, consider how you can embody this principle of joyful, selfless giving. It might involve volunteering your time, using your skills to help others, or simply being more attentive to the needs of those around you. How might adopting this attitude of generous service transform your relationships and your perspective on life?

Day 5: Finding Purpose in Adversity

Reading: Acts 21:10-14

Devotional: As Paul approached Jerusalem, he faced increasing warnings about the hardships awaiting him. Yet, he saw these impending difficulties not as obstacles to avoid, but as part of God's purpose for his life. His response, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus," reveals a profound understanding that following Christ may lead us through valleys of suffering. This perspective challenges us to reframe our view of life's difficulties. Instead of seeing trials as setbacks, how might we view them as opportunities for God to work in and through us? Reflect on a current challenge in your life. How might God be using this situation to deepen your faith, refine your character, or open doors for ministry?