

Did Paul Disobey God in Going to Jerusalem?

Acts 21:1-16

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And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. - Acts 21:4, ESV

[NOTE: Brent Prentice has a great post on this text [here](#). Ray Stedman takes the opposite position [here](#). You can check several commentaries on BlueLetterBible.org [here](#).]

The actions of the Apostle Paul in today's passage seem very unusual. He is warned by the disciples in Tyre not to go to Jerusalem. Luke's language here is very strong: "*through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.*" So, did Paul disobey the Spirit when he decided to go to Jerusalem?

I think it's important to acknowledge that this is a difficult question to answer with certainty. On the surface, it really does look like God is warning Paul not to go to Jerusalem, both in verse 4 and with Agabus' warning in verses 11-12. Not everything the Apostles are recorded as doing in Scripture is necessarily right just because they did it. We do know that these were sinful men capable of stubborn self-will at times, so we shouldn't jump to conclusions.

Still, if we back up and put today's passage in the context of the book of Acts, it seems likely that Paul was being faithful in going to Jerusalem. His friends were being loving in wanting to stop him because they cared for him. He knew what he was facing and was willing to pay the price to be an ambassador for Christ in Jerusalem.

Why do I think this? We need to keep in mind that none of the messages Paul received in today's passage were new information for him. In Acts 20:22-24, he had told the Ephesians elders:

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 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. (ESV)

Notice that Paul said he was "constrained by the Spirit." He felt like he did not have a choice. If he was going to be faithful, he had to go and he had to accept whatever awaited him. This is why Paul responded the way he did to Agabus' warning and the disciples' pleading in verse 13 by saying, "*What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*" (ESV)

Heavenly Father, give us the courage to stand for Christ and be willing to accept whatever opposition or consequences we may face. Lord, give us faithful hearts and keep us steadfast until we see You face-to-face. In Jesus' name, Amen.