

Date: July 7, 2019

Text: Acts 21:1-14

Title: Embracing Suffering or Stifling the Spirit?

Big Idea: Followers of Jesus should faithfully obey even through suffering because Jesus is worth it.

Read Acts 20:22-24 & 21:1-14

Three themes: **Obedience, Endurance, Devotion**

1. **Obedience:** *We must obey the Holy Spirit even when we hear competing voices.*

- God's will for Paul was very difficult, but he was *constrained* by the Spirit (see Acts 20:22). How did he know God's will for him (see Acts 9:16, 20:23 & 21:11)?
- What voices do we tend to listen to *instead* of God's when we make decisions about how God is leading us?
- If we are to be obedient to God's leading, what does this require from us? How do we discern God's will for us?
- It surprises us that "the will of the Lord" would be suffering, and it is a hard-fought battle to get to the place in our own lives where we submit to it in obedience to Christ.
- Acts 21:4 implies that the Spirit was leading the believers to urge Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but what is most likely happening here is that the believers are fulfilling Galatians 5:22-23 & 6:2 towards Paul. How so? What are some practical ways we can bear one another's burdens in the midst of their suffering?

2. **Endurance:** *We must patiently endure suffering even when it doesn't make sense.*

- Suffering is inevitable in life, but especially in the Christian life. We are never promised an easy carefree life.
- Read and reflect on the following passages: Luke 9:23-24; 1 Peter 3:8-4:2 and 4:12-19; James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5; Hebrews 12:1-11.
- What kind of suffering is God asking you to endure?

3. **Devotion.** *We must be devoted to Christ even when suffering comes our way.*

- What drove Paul to obey Christ and endure suffering? Consider the following passages: Acts 20:24; Philippians 3:8-14; Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18 and 11:23-28.
- Paul's life was devoted to the glory *and enjoyment* of his King. Reflect on your life—are you devoted to the glory and enjoyment of Jesus?