

A Perspective on Faith's Future

In Steve's sermon on Sunday, he talked about how God is changing his assignment at Faith. As a result it is possible that by next summer, we will have a new lead pastor. This news produces a range of thoughts and emotions in us, right? We wrestle with this new assignment and what it means for Steve and for us. In our passage today, Luke records how two different churches wrestled with an assignment God had given to the Apostle Paul. Though our situation is different, there are some helpful perspectives for us as we begin to walk through this time of transition at Faith.

Opening Discussion: How has the news about Steve's upcoming transition hit you?

Read Acts 9:15-16; 20:22-24

1. What do these verses say about Paul's assignment from God? What has Paul understood about the part suffering and hardship would play in him carrying out his assignment?

Read Acts 21:1-14

2. Paul is on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 20:16). What do the Christians at Tyre say to Paul regarding his trip to Jerusalem (v. 4)?
3. Once in Caesarea, what message does the prophet, Agabus, have for Paul? How do the believers in Caesarea react to this message?
4. What was Paul's response to the warning about going to Jerusalem? Why does Paul respond differently to such a warning?
5. In both Tyre (v. 4) and Caesarea (vv. 10-11) people **led by the Spirit** warn Paul against his trip to Jerusalem. How do you understand this in light of what Paul said to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:22 that he was **compelled by the Spirit** to go to Jerusalem?

6. How principles or implications for our upcoming transition do you see modeled in what happened between Paul and these two churches?

Steve said:

As we move forward with the secession planning process, it will be important for ***all of us*** to have a commitment to the will of God. In Scripture, the will of God is sometimes universally true for all people everywhere. For example, Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4, “This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality. . .” We don’t have to debate whether or not that applies to all of us. But here in Acts 21, the will of God is circumstantial, not universal. On other occasions, it was the will of God that Paul escape persecution; in some cities, Paul was sent away to avoid hostile crowds (Damascus, Thessalonica, Berea, etc.). But in this specific circumstance the Holy Spirit impressed upon Paul that he should return to Jerusalem, knowing he would be “imprisoned and afflicted.” As we just read [in verse 14, they accepted that it was the will of God for Paul to suffer]. In a similar way, I (along with our leadership) am asking you to accept that it is the will of God that we have a transition of leadership here at Faith.

7. Why do you think a commitment to the will of God is vital as we move through this time of transition of leadership? What are some ways this commitment might show up as we walk through the transition?

Steve said:

Today’s passage illustrates that committed Christians sometimes disagree with each other. And sometimes one person/group is right and the other is wrong. This requires great discernment. There’s not really a formula for discerning the will of God when it’s circumstantial (like when you need to find and hire the next senior pastor). But there is a virtue that will be priceless for us, namely humility.

8. In what ways will humility be important in this transition process?
9. As Paul departed from Tyre, he was sent off with prayer (v. 5-6). How might prayer be a critical spiritual discipline for us during this time of pastoral transition?