

## Acts: The Gospel Gone Viral

### Lesson 42 “Setting Our Heart on the Plan of God”

I. We have been studying through *Acts* and how the gospel went viral through various revivals in the first century. This is what caused the gospel to spread so rapidly in the first century.

A. We just finished studying the greatest revival in the New Testament (Ephesus) and today we are going to look at what the Apostle Paul did next.

1. We are going to see that he followed his heart and made some mistakes. This should give us hope if Paul made mistakes and God still used him, that God can use us when we make mistakes.
2. Paul’s mistakes ended up being a school of hard knocks that led to his arrest in Jerusalem and imprisonment in Rome. Out of that he suffered things he should never have suffered, but at the same time God still spoke through him the prison epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, etc). God brought beauty from ashes and grafted in a mistake to his plan to make it look it was the will of God.

B. Here are the two things I want you to get out of today:

1. Obey God. It’s better so you don’t have to suffer unnecessarily and so He can bring His will to pass on earth with less hindrance. I want to teach you how to obey when God asks you to do something hard.
2. If you do mess up, the gifts and callings are without repentance. If you repent, He can graft your mistake back into His plan that your disobedience looked like part of the plan. **Acts 23:11 Jesus didn’t condemn Paul and say he screwed up so bad, He couldn’t bring His will to pass.**

II. Setting Our Heart on the Plan of God

A. **Acts 21:1-6 Paul’s First Warning (at Tyre)**

1. God **clearly** told Paul that he was called to the Gentiles (**Romans 11:13**) yet he had a heart for his countrymen and so he always wanted to return to Jerusalem to minister.
2. **Verse 4** These disciples begin to discern through the spirit that Paul wasn’t supposed to go back to Jerusalem. Did Paul listen? No. Why, he followed his heart instead of the word of God. (We need to follow our heart except when the word of God is clearly telling us to do something else.) If that happens we need to mediate that word until it gets rooted in our heart so we can retrain our heart.
3. The brethren prayed with Paul.

B. **Acts 21:7-14 Paul’s Second Warning (at Caesarea)**

1. Paul came to the house of Phillip the evangelist (from *Acts 7-8*). Phillip had four virgin daughters who prophesied. **Put that in your women can't speak or prophesy in church peace pipe and smoke it!**
2. After this Abagus (the same one who accurately prophesied a famine would hit the earth in *Acts 11*) prophesied. He prophesied Paul's future if he went to Jerusalem. This caused everyone who was with Paul to beg him not to go.
3. After the disciples saw Paul wouldn't be persuaded, they said, "The will of the Lord be done." This didn't mean they believed Paul was following God's plan. It meant they were commending him to the Lord's hands.
4. Why did Paul go? He set his heart to go. **Romans 9:3, Romans 10:1.**
5. What's crazy is he knew Israel wouldn't believe **Romans 10:19-21. The reason Paul went to Jerusalem is set his heart on Israel and never really set it on his true calling - the Gentiles.**

### C. How do I set my heart?

1. When we are born again we get a new spirit and new heart. The spirit is the part of the heart that will never be defiled, but our heart can be and when it does it can be hard to hear the Holy Spirit within us.
2. The Greek word for heart is *kardia*. It is the center of our spiritual life and is defined as both our thoughts and feelings.
3. The Bible says our life follows after the direction of our heart. **Proverbs 4:23, Proverbs 23:7, Matthew 12:34** This means we must direct our heart to the truth.
4. We set our heart by renewing our mind and renewing our emotions/feelings -
5. **Colossians 3:2** says to set our minds on things that are above. It doesn't just mean set our intellect. The Greek word *phroneo* means a mindset (pattern of thought) where our affections are included.
6. **What this means is God can have my intellect, but if He doesn't have my affections, I can live in sin. We want to create neural pathways in our brain to serve God.**
7. A neural pathway is a series of connected neurons that send signals from one part of the brain to another and they strongly affect our **emotions (sin is emotional)**. They are formed by experiences, what we think about, etc. They can be used for good or bad. Good would have been Paul going to the Gentiles. The bad was Paul going to the Jews (men and pornography).
9. When men watch pornography the first time it carves out a path in the brain (like a trail in the woods). When they get to the end of the road to the destination they get a dopamine high. The more they watch it, the more that trail gets broken in and the faster you can get from point A to B to get the sinful emotional response. This is how men get bound to pornography or other sinful habits.
10. How do psychologists say to overcome? - not by not trying to focus on the negative (similar to focusing on the law), but to focus on positive things.

ex: Don't keep thinking about the junk food you can't eat so you can lose 20 lbs (that increases the neural pathway that likes junk food. Think about what you'll look and feel like when you lose the 20lbs. Allow yourself to see it and feel it emotionally. **Paul should have thought about what revival would look and feel like among the Gentiles and allow himself to see that exclusively.**

**11. God created our emotions. They aren't to control us, we are to control them and use them for positive things.**

### III. Conclusion

A. Pray Closing Prayer

B. Call Up Prayer Team