

Man's Word or God's Word? - Acts 21:1-16

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- [0 : 00] Good morning, 4th. I had no idea if anybody would be here this weekend. Obviously, you don't have friends either. So, we're kind of in this together.
- But truly, it's good to be together. It's good to gather. It's good to be refreshed by the body of Christ.
- To hear from the Lord, to celebrate, to be reminded that we're gospel people through communion. So, very thankful to be here this morning. Just want to exhort us, encourage us as well.
- Summer can be just an odd time. I'm talking with Scott a bit. I know there's a burden on the shepherds that we pastor well in the summer. With people in and out, I just hope that you're finding time to draw near to the Lord.
- And enjoying His presence, spending time with Him so that by the time we hit September, we are closer to the Lord, not further away.
- [1 : 07] So, just an exhortation for all of us there to prioritize time with the Lord. Go ahead and turn open to Acts 21. We're going to be looking at verses 1-16 this morning as we continue our study through the narrative of Acts.
- And with that, let me pray. Father, it is so good to be here this morning.
- And even missing last week, I feel out of sync a bit. And Lord, I do pray that we would be fully present this morning.
- Lord, that we would recognize that not only is there ministry you want to do in our hearts, but there's ministry you want to do through us. Even in time as we listen, as we exhort, encourage one another, we take time to pray for one another.
- Might you use us to be of blessing and encouragement to another before this day is out. Thank you, Jesus, that you endure the cross for the joy that was set before you, which had our names written.
- [2 : 29] And so, Lord, we are thankful that we're gospel people, that indeed we're new creations. Lord, that you continue to do a work in us, whether we take a step back or two steps back.
- Lord, you continue to do your work in us, this sanctifying work. And Lord, might you accomplish some of that even this morning.
- Lord, we're here to meet with you. We're here to hear from you. And might you speak to each of us in a powerful way. We pray this in your name, Lord Jesus, and all God's people said, amen.
- So I did mention I was out last week. We got daughter number one married off last Saturday. And I feel like something was accomplished, although I think I have like 85 more daughters to go.
- But it was an interesting sort of week, couple weeks leading up to the wedding, because it was just sort of a reflective time for me.
- [3 : 33] Mulling over a bit, like how am I supposed to be feeling here. And then reflecting on how did I do.

It was kind of a heavy thought, you know, how do I do as a dad. Like, because it's an ending in many ways and a beginning, but it was time that I appreciated and also disliked.

Having to sort of consider my calling as a dad. Did I raise my kid in the fear and admonition of the Lord? And I'm so thankful for the gospel. The fact that God is a God that forgives sins, because I have many failings as a father.

And so it was just, it was a healthy time in that regard. And this morning I want to sort of take the same approach that this morning ought to be a bit of a reflective time for us.

In terms of thinking about our own calling as followers of Christ, as those that desire to make much of Jesus in this life, those that desire to live for his glory, how are we doing in that calling?

[4 : 43] And so we need moments like this where we reflect. Because the messages all around us are, don't be serious about God. You don't have to be that committed to the Lord.

You can compromise here or there or you can prioritize these things over having affections for the Lord. And so we need times where we are confronted in our calling.

And this morning will be just that as those that want to be serious about the gospel and God's glory. And so the catalyst for this exercise for us this morning is the example of one who lived out his calling very well, the Apostle Paul.

And in fact, since chapter 13 in our study, we've been confronted by his example. But I love the fact that Paul is this catalyst for us to reflect on our own calling as followers of Christ.

And what I love about Paul, what I love about this man as our guide is that he just started life worse than all of us combined. Like he was a foul man and yet completely transformed by the gospel.

[5 : 59] So as we pick up our narrative this morning, I'm going to throw a map up for us to look at.

We're on the final leg of Paul's third missionary journey. We're going to end it today in Jerusalem. We're going to complete this third mission. As we recall from last week is Kamesh shared Paul, he's 30 miles south of Ephesus in the city of Miletus.

If you can find Miletus there on the map just below Ephesus. And as Kamesh shared Paul, he opted not to go to Ephesus on his return trip to Jerusalem.

Instead, heading to this city just south, he didn't want to be delayed. He was in a rush. He was under a time constraint to get to Jerusalem. We know from Acts chapter 20 verse 16, he wanted to get to Jerusalem for the feast day of Pentecost.

And it's interesting that he's under this time constraint. Like what's driving you Paul? Why do you have to be there for Pentecost? And I think it's helpful to be reminded of Paul's heart that he loved the Jewish people.

[7 : 14] He loved them. In fact, in Romans 9, 3, I think he says something in the spirit of God, a curse me. Damn me. As long as my brothers and my Jewish brethren that they might be rescued, they might be saved.

And so he has a heart for the Jewish people that they would hear the gospel. They would respond to the gospel. What better time than to speak the gospel than when the city of Jerusalem is crowded?

This is maximum effect because during that feast day, you would have Jews from all over the region. President in fact, Josephus in the first century, he says this about Pentecost.

This feast is festival. He said many tens of thousands gathered for this. Many tens of thousands. You want maximum opportunity to share the gospel with your Jewish brethren, then you get to Jerusalem for Pentecost.

And that's exactly what Paul had in his heart to do. So we'll be looking at verses 1 through 16 and let's just launch in now first three verses. But I'm going to keep the map up so that you can follow along as I read.

[8 : 29] And Luke writes, when we had parted, talking about saying goodbye to these elders, those leaders of the Ephesian church, this church he spent three years with.

So when we had parted from them and sailed, we came by a straight course to Kos. And the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara.

I think you guys are following along. I don't need to explain. I wish I had one of, you know, like, I don't know why Scott gets all the cool gadgets, but verse two.

And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left.

So they're south of Cyprus. We sailed to Syria, landed there for there the ship was to unload its cargo.

[9 : 35] All right. Let's just keep that map up for a while. So Paul would have sailed during the day, anchored at different ports on his way back to Jerusalem.

Initially on a smaller vessel, then he catches a larger ship there in Patara in order to make the 400 mile trip across the Mediterranean to there.

But I just want us to consider this map for a moment. This is not a vacation map for Paul. This is not a map to say, hey, look at all the cool places that I've been and all the really amazing things that I've seen.

Like this is a testimony to this man, to the labor, to the love that he has for the Lord, for the gospel and for people. And it's confrontive as we consider our own calling.

Do I give? Am I willing to give? Am I willing to sacrifice like Paul, like that man? And maybe at times we think, well, Paul was unique.

[10 : 46] Paul was different. I'm an ordinary Christian, whatever that is supposed to mean.

But I want us to note that Paul was zealous for the things of God, but he wasn't alone. He wasn't alone.

Even in the story, even though it's not highlighted, I want to point out something here. Paul was serving with a team because it says here in verse one, Luke writes, we had parted and we came by a straight course.

So who else is with Paul? The author of this book, who is Luke? This might need to be participatory this morning.

And not just Luke, but there's an entire team of individuals, if we read back and I'm not going to turn there, but in Acts 20, verse four, we have seven other individuals mentioned. Sopater and Secundus and Timothy and other bunch of names that are hard to pronounce.

[11 : 51] So there's an entire group that is sold out, that is committed to the mission of seeing the gospel advance. Paul wasn't alone. There were others committed to this type of life.

And that should be encouraging for us. Paul wasn't unique. So he can be a model for us because even in this narrative, there are others that are giving much for the sake of the gospel.

But maybe you're thinking, hey, man, it would have been so much easier back then. Because those were Bible times. Again, whatever that means.

But I want us to recognize it's always been difficult. It's always been scary. It's always been intimidating to share the gospel. Even as they went and approached this city of Rhodes on their way, I have another slide, a little rendering of the statue that once stood in front of this city.

This is a statue of Helios, a false god, 50 foot high marble pedestal, 110 foot high iron and bronze statue. Actually, this inspired the Statue of Liberty.

[13 : 06] Yeah, we were inspired by a statue built 2300 years prior. And this is the statue that stood there at Rhodes.

Now, granted, when Paul went, it was gone. Only lasts about 50 years built in the third century BC. But certainly maybe there was a foot left or something. But there would have been something to demonstrate just sort of the ingenuity, the magnitude, the pride, the idolatry that was present in Paul's day.

And proclaiming the gospel, it's always been intimidating. It's always been hard. And yet Paul was undeterred in living a life that honored God with everything that he was.

Well, Paul, he's now made it across the Mediterranean. He arrives in the port city of Tyre, some 100 miles north of Jerusalem. We pick up our narrative here in verse four. 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. When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey.

[14 : 20] And they all with wives and children accompanied us until we were outside the city. And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship and they returned home.

So once Paul gets to Tyre, the Phoenician area there in Syria, just north of Jerusalem, some 100 miles, he stays in this city of Tyre a week.

And we don't know why a week. The passage indicates that perhaps it took that much time for this cargo ship that they were, they caught a ride on that it to unload and load again.

We don't exactly know, but he stayed there a week. And what we find out about his time there, the first thing that Paul does on arriving to Tyre, it says having sought out the disciples.

Which actually tells us a couple things. First, it tells us that there is a church there in Tyre, that there are followers of Christ.

[15 : 27] But secondly, it also tells us that Paul's unfamiliar with these people. He has to seek them out. He's unfamiliar with where this church is located.

He's unfamiliar with this church, which tells us that Paul most likely did not plant this church in this particular city. So how then did a church come to be in this port city?

Well, we read back in Acts 11-19 and we find out. It says, now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.

So I want us to consider here this scene. I mean, recall how I said Paul began his life as an incredibly evil man.

Hated Jesus. Hated the followers of Jesus. And so Christians were actually displaced because of Paul's rage against the church.

[16 : 46] And now 20 years later, he's fellowshiping with these same believers. Think about that. It's astounding.

It shows the power of the gospel. Like there's families that are loving on Paul that are accompanying him to the beach saying farewell, praying together. And it's just an incredible picture of the gospel uniting people that never should have been like friends.

It was Paul's sin that caused the church to be planted in this town. Paul was a church planter. And yet it was his sin that caused the church to be planted entire.

Even this man's sin was unable to usurp the sovereignty of God. And I think there is some encouragement here for all of us just as an aside.

And this is not an excuse to sin. But if you have royally blown it in this life, first repent. But second, be hopeful.

[18 : 05] Be hopeful. Because that's not the end of the story. It wasn't for Paul. And you know what the prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 43-19?

Our God is a God who can make a way, what? In the wilderness and create rivers in the desert.

And it's a mystery. But the gospel gives us hope. And I love this image. That it was Paul's, it was his sin, and yet a church.

It grew out of this. Well, these believers, they love Paul even just after a week together. And so much so that what we find out is they're warning him.

Paul, don't go to Jerusalem. Don't go to Jerusalem and recall. Paul is chased out of so many of these cities that he ministers in.

[19 : 10] There's a band of these Judaizers, these Jewish religious leaders from Jerusalem that sort of chase them around these Gentile cities.

And now he wants to go to Jerusalem into like the belly of the beast. Why in the world would you want to go to Jerusalem, Paul?

What are you thinking? Two days ago I inflated a pool for my kids.

My wife got it at Costco. Brand new. Brand new. They decided to play with pointy objects in the pool.

I don't need to share any more, but it was good that I was at church and I had a date. I was sort of like... I was like, what's going on in your mind?

[20 : 14] Why would you do that? That's what these people are thinking about. Paul, you are nuts. You're crazy. Why would you be going back there?

And I think it's fueled by this affection for him. They're pleading with him. We were at war and a loved one is wanting to enlist and you know that they're going to go into harm's way and you're just pleading to them, no, don't.

Don't. See, God gave the believers in Tyre some insight into what was awaiting Paul. And verse 4 says, And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

So here we have a message to Paul. It's warning number one. What's Paul to do with this? He wants to be committed to the calling of God on his life.

What does he do with it? Well, we're going to come back to that. But let's move on. Verse 7. When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at...

[21 : 18] Paulinaeus. And we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea and we entered the house of Philip the Evangelist, who was one of the seven, and we stayed with him.

He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. So at this point, Paul now is puddle jumping down the coast towards Jerusalem. He arrives in Caesarea some 60 miles north of Jerusalem.

It's another impressive city of the day. Herod the Great built this city. It held the first artificial harbor in the ancient world.

Again, very easy to be intimidated by man's accomplishments and to be about Jesus, to be about the gospel. And as Paul arrives here in Caesarea, he stays with a friend, Philip the Evangelist.

We met him 20 years prior back in Acts chapter 6. He's a servant leader serving tables, caring for those that are overlooked. He's described here in Acts as an evangelist.

[22 : 21] The only time we have this designation of anyone in the book of Acts and rightly deserved, he was a missionary to Samaria. He also shared the gospel with this man from Ethiopia.

And now he's relocated, it says in Acts 8:40, he just got that down, to Caesarea. And he's been there for 20 years and he's a perfect man to be about gospel ministry in this very difficult city.

Philip is a servant, but Philip's a lion. He has an amazing family, he's got four daughters, possess this ability to receive messages from God.

If you want to know more about these gifts, you can go back to our series on 1 Corinthians and try to cover those pretty extensively. We don't know if Philip's daughters shared anything with Paul on this occurrence, but we learn of another who does.

So look at verses 10 and 11. It says, while we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea and coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, thus says the Holy Spirit.

[23 : 32] This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

Wow. That's quite a message. And we met this man, we met Agabus back in Acts 11. He spoke of a coming famine.

This individually still functioning this role of a prophet. As the church is in transition, it's being established. Ephesians 2:20 says, hey, there's no modern day apostles or prophets today.

Part of the foundation of the New Testament church. But God gives Agabus insight into what is awaiting Paul, just like he did those earlier.

And so Agabus makes the 60 mile trip north from Jerusalem to warn Paul. And here we have warning number two.

[24 : 31] Messaging all around Paul. And now it's compounding the Paul. This is the way you're supposed to go.

This is the way you're supposed to live. And this warning is, it's like a prophecy and a performance. Like all in one. Right?

It's this prophet in sort of the spirit of an Old Testament prophet. He binds himself with Paul's belt. This is what's going to happen, Paul, if you go to Jerusalem. And the prophets, I don't know why God had him do that, but obviously there was some effect or like God's serious, right?

Listen up. There's a prophet that came to Jeroboam. The prophet tore up his shirt into 12 pieces. And Jeroboam, you're going to get these 12 pieces and return the kingdom away from Solomon.

Wow, I didn't see that coming. Like the guy gave up a shirt. I mean Isaiah gave up everything. He was like running naked for three years to make a point. And I don't know if it was fully naked, but it says naked in the Bible.

[25 : 44] We know Ezekiel, he had built a little model city. He started smashing it to make a point. So this prophet, he makes an impact.

And those that are listening, they hear it. In fact, they hear it so much to look at verse 12, that's how they respond.

When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go to Jerusalem.

The believers in Caesarea, they are crushed in spirit for Paul and they're urging him. Cut your ministry short, Paul.

Paul, you've done enough. Pull back. Take your foot off the gas. Cut your trip short.

[26 : 56] Paul now is hearing warning number three. What should Paul have done with all of these warnings?

All of this messaging that's occurring around him. He's hearing in fact from other believers in fact. A prophet.

And even those closest to him. And I have to wonder if this final warning here in Caesarea is the most confusing of them all for him. Because it says we heard this and we urged him not to go.

Who's part of the we? Who wrote the book? Luke. Even Luke. Paul's trusted friend, his confidant, his brother in Christ.

Even Luke now is saying, Paul, don't go. And so the question we have to ask ourselves here is, what should Paul have done?

[28 : 03] Who should he have listened to? And maybe an even more important question was Paul disobeying God by heading to Jerusalem instead of heeding these warnings.

And I would say not at all. Paul was not disobeying God. In fact, what I want us to understand these warnings to Paul, none of this was news.

I think it's helpful for us if we recognize to sort of make sense of what's occurring here. But Paul knew this back in Acts 20 verses 22 and 23. Listen.

Luke writes, and now behold, I am going to Jerusalem. This is Paul speaking, constrained by the spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there.

Verse 23, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

[29 : 21] Paul was dialed in to God's Spirit. He was connected to the Lord. He was sensitive to God's leading in his life. And the truth that the Lord had given to him, Paul wasn't disobeying God.

For Paul, it was God's calling that took priority even over the counsel of men, those he trusted.

In fact, Paul knew suffering was present ahead of him from day one when he trusted in Christ. Recall back in Acts 9, because Jesus, recall what he says to Paul, you're a chosen instrument.

You're going to share the Gospel to the Gentiles, the kings, to the Jews. You're going to share the Gospel to everyone. And you're going to suffer from my name.

None of this was news to Paul. He knew it was awaiting him. So what do we make of these warnings in Paul's choice to continue?

[30 : 32] I would suggest that none of these prophecies given to others, they said anything about not going. The text doesn't indicate that they were told Paul shouldn't go.

They were simply given information about what awaited him. The cost that awaited Paul. See, the believers around Paul, they received good data given by the Holy Spirit.

But it was fear and affection that determined how they would interpret and respond. And I think there's a caution for all of us here that we need to be thoughtful, prayerful, ground in Scripture, slow to offer God's will to another.

Because if we're not, we can actually do damage. And we can miss out on the way God actually wants us to minister to them.

See, I believe that those around Paul, they missed an opportunity to minister to Paul in his hour of need. Why did God give others insight into what awaited Paul? I believe so that they could have encouraged him.

[31 : 52] They could have said, Paul, we're with you. We are with you. Be of courage. You're not alone.

Instead, they took the data given and they simply misapplied it. Even though it was set out of love for Paul, because what essentially they were encouraging to do was to back off.

Back off your conviction, back off your calling that you have from God. Kind of reminds me of a similar exchange, Matthew 16.

Remember that? Peter and Jesus. Jesus tells Peter, I'm going to suffer. And what does Peter say? No! No!

Jesus rebukes him. Right? You're being a hindrance to God's plan here, Peter. In fact, who does Jesus call Peter in that moment?

[33 : 01] Yeah. Don't go that far if you're reproofing a brother. Okay? Only Jesus can do that. Right? Don't go that far. And essentially he says to Peter in that moment, you know, your mind is on the horizontal, not the vertical.

I believe that if Paul would have heeded the words of those around him, these warnings, these messages, two critical things would not have occurred because of it.

The first one, getting to Jerusalem for Paul, it allowed him to deliver a sizable gift that he had for the Jewish believers.

And there was need. This gift, it wasn't just to meet needs, but it was also to cement a theological truth.

That in Christ, we're one. There's neither Jew, there's neither Gentile. And there was division in the church at this time. And so this was critical for Paul to get there, to cement this truth.

[34 : 12] Ephesians 2,14, truth that the gospel has made both one. And so he was driven to get there for that. You can jot down Romans 15, 25 where he mentions this.

I got to get to Jerusalem to deliver this gift. This gift that the Gentiles took for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Secondly, if he would have heeded their warnings, he may never have gotten to Rome.

And certainly not free of charge, which is what occurs. And we'll see that as we go through the rest of this narrative. And if the gospel didn't get to Rome, it never would have pierced this planet.

And you see the gospel getting to Rome means it's going to go everywhere. And in a very real sense, we are here today because Paul was obedient to the call of God on his life.

That's how profound those implications are. He didn't back off even though pressured to do so.

[35 : 29] He was obedient to God. He was obedient to God. You know, under all this pressure to relent, how does Paul respond?

I think we know, but let's read it together. Verse 13. Then Paul answered, what are you doing? Weeping, breaking my heart.

For I am ready not only to be in prison, but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Like Paul loved those that he was with. He loved those that he was ministering with and to. And yet he was resolved, you know what? I'm going to Jerusalem. I know what is awaiting me there.

God has already told me. And again, he was very much in the spirit of even Jesus.

[36 : 27] Who for the joy set before him, endured the cross. For you, for me, for the joy set before him.

That's part of our calling church, for the joy that is set before us. We minister, we serve. For the joy set before them, Tyler and Charis, they're going to go plant a church. Some remote place, maybe for the rest of their life.

For the joy set before her, Danny, she's going to be doing the same thing in another region. Because she believes that people are going to receive the gospel. For the joy set before him, Eric's going to be planting a church in the South Hill.

For the joy that is set before. For the joy set before us, we make the gospel an issue with those that we have influence with. And Paul models that for us.

Jesus modeled it for us. So the key question for us this morning, what is driving our life?

[37 : 32] Our decisions? Is it God's call? Or is it rather warnings and words of man?

Maybe you're thinking to yourself, Jay, I have a calling. Calling for pastors. Yes, you have a calling.

As those in Christ, we are new creations. We exist to display the beauty of the gospel to everyone in every relationship.

Your calling is that you have been called an ambassador. You represent Christ in this life.

Paul says in Ephesians 2, there's good works. God has uniquely prepared for you, for me. That's a calling that we get to walk in in this life.

[38 : 33] Jay, you mean I'm not here just to enjoy? Just to be entertained? To indulge? To self-medicate? Whatever it is?

No! Only if you want to waste your very short life. Let me tell you, life is short. Even though none of us believe it?

Well, maybe some of you, because you're at any rate. You're even older than this guy. But we don't think about it.

I was struck this week, I was driving down Division, which is the longest restaurant street in America. You just learn something, that's your fact for the morning. Your fantastic fact.

And if you drive down and you can just find every fast food restaurant and some little hole in the wall, greasy spoons and restaurants everywhere. You're driving, you're just thinking, man, life is eating, life is eating. And then hidden, and I just saw this this week for the first time, or maybe I just registered, I've seen it.

[39 : 33] It's like between McDonald's and Burger King, it was like Pacific Northwest crematory. And it looked attractive, I'm like crematory, is that like ice cream? That sounds good.

And it was just like, wait a second. I was so interested, I had to look it up online.

And I kid you not, there's a tab that says, like, coming events. I just, who's the web designer coming to events?

It just strikes me, coming events. It's not an ice cream shop. But it's just hidden.

We drive by it every day. But we don't think about it. But that's the truth. Life is short. There's an appointment we have.

[40 : 46] Either the Lord comes or we go to Him. Like, it's guaranteed if you're in Christ, it's going to occur. And if you're not in Christ, you need the Lord.

Because you're going to stand before a holy God. And your good works aren't enough. You need God to have done something on your behalf. And He did. And He provided a Savior, a rescuer to pay for your sins.

That's why we worship Jesus. Amen? That's why we just took communion to celebrate the fact that we have been forgiven of much.

That the sting of death is gone. Life is so very short. There's a calling on our lives, church. Men, there's a calling on our lives as husbands, as fathers.

To lead, to pastor our families. To model Jesus to them. We set the pace at home on what it means to abide. To be selfless, generous, courageous, and to proclaim good news.

[41 : 55] We model that. And some days we don't model it well. And there are seasons in my life where I did not. But I'm so thankful for the gospel.

Because today I am. And if you're not right now, repent. So that you can. And there's joy in that.

Well, here's the question that I have for us. How was Paul able to live with such conviction? Not caving to the ideas around him? I think there's a couple of insights we can gain from the text.

First one comes to us in the response of the believers to Paul after they see his resolve. Look at verse 14. And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, let the will of the Lord be done.

God, your will be done. I know I'm making a little bit of a step here.

[43 : 07] But I think it's helpful for us. How do we know God's will? How do you primarily know God's will? Well, Jay, I just spend time in creation and I watch the butterflies.

I tell you, no, guys will. I tell you, no, guys will. First thing you want to live into up to your calling in your calling in this life.

You got to saturate your mind with God's word. It's God's call on your life. I don't know what God's call is.

It's really going to be helpful. Church, we cannot be moved by that which we don't know. Are you a fervent reader of God's word?

Season is in my life when I have been. Season is in my life when I have not been. Today I am. Praise God. I'm thankful. This book, there's a massive story in here, church, that actually we're a part of.

[44 : 25] It's a living story and we are in these pages. It's part of the New Testament church. We're part of this narrative.

This is our identity. This is our story. It's a living story. What speaks is we commune with Him in these pages.

So if God's word has no place in your life, man, you're losing. You are. Because when I'm not in God's word, I lose.

I conform as Paul says. I conform to the messages, to the warnings. You'll succumb to them. I had a friend who spent little time in this book.

And the messaging that he continued to reflect on was, man, if I give up this particular sin, I'm not going to name what it was, but if I give this up, life will have no color.

[45 : 29] And that's what he believed. And it shaped him. All sorts of messages you can allow, shape you, that life is about, you know, just, right?

Here's a message. You're retired. Let the young people do the ministry.

See, I've never picked on those that are older than me, and I just did. It won't happen again. I promise you. I promise you. But that's a lie.

That's a lie. Retirement is for, no, retirement is for ministry. Amen. Life is ministry.

To live is Christ. Or here's a warning. If you name Jesus, you will pay. Right? That's where our world is at right now.

[46 : 28] If you name anything a virtue you'll pay, what's driving you? I don't know if this is a confession, but you can take it if you want, as you will.

But I do enjoy country music. I'm just going to say. I don't know if that's a confession. I can't listen to it every day.

I have to be, like, on my playlist, I have to thumb down many songs. I have to be thoughtful about the messaging going in, because if I adopt much of what's in country music, it will destroy God's calling on my life.

And I think we know, right? If that's what you're ingesting, you never hear from the Lord what you're going to do in life is you're going to treat alcohol like water and women like chattel.

I mean, that's much of what happens in country music. I enjoy country music. Okay? Enough said.

[47 : 41] Second insight. First, obviously, you have to. You have to. And I'm telling you what, this is the burden. You don't have to gather here every Sunday in the summer, your vacation, whatever, but man, you have got to, you've got to meet with the Lord.

You have to. I have to. Do you even know that Pastor Scott does? You think that he's just a gentle, kind, servant kind of guy because he just naturally... No. We've seen him be scary, just not often, but he's like, we are in this together.

Second thing, you want to live out God's call on your life? Look at verses 15 and 16. After these days, we, Luke, got ready and went to Jerusalem and some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, bringing us to the house of Mason, of Cyprus, an early disciple with whom we should lodge.

I love this scene, right? Once Luke and the others align with God's call on Paul's life, what happens? They're in.

Even it says, Christians from Caesarea, they went with Paul. They were saying, don't go, don't go. Paul's saying, I'm going.

[49 : 03] God's already told me what's awake. And you see this, you know what? If you're going, we're going with you.

You want to live out God's call on your life, don't go it alone. Don't go it alone. Even though we don't always do it right, and I think there's sort of a testimony here of Christians sort of missing it, we don't always do it right.

But the church, the local church is the place you're going to find grace. You're going to find forgiveness. You're going to find encouragement. And you're going to be inspired by the courage of others who are seeking heart after the Lord.

Do not go it alone. I'll end with this. I spoke with a woman this week who hasn't been to church for six years.

And she said this to me. She said, Pastor Jay, my life today, presently, is a train wreck.

[50 : 16] I would encourage you, not only participate here, but find others that you go, man, I see their prayer life and I want a prayer life like that.

I see their courage and I want courage like that. I see their obedience, their willingness to actually practice self-denial. I need that.

You find those people and you begin to spend time with them. You secretly adopt them. Don't tell them. But that's what we're doing. That's what you do.

Because we're in this together. Father, thank you for the example of our brother Paul. Lord, that he lived out his calling with great vigor and zeal, faithfulness, courage, even despite so much of the messaging around him to do otherwise.

Lord, I don't know who has voice in our life today. But Lord, if it's an unbeliever, if it's our flesh, whatever it is, God, we want to repent of that.

[51 : 31] And we need Your help. We need Your power. We need transforming grace to be able to say no in order that we can say yes.

Lord, I pray that we would be a church where many could find encouragement. Many could find grace.

Many could experience the reality and the power of the gospel because there are gospel people here who are walking close to You.

Lord, I'm so thankful that You are a patient God and that You, even in the example of Paul, Lord, somehow You made a way where there was no way.

And Lord, he saw fruit. He saw a river in a desert despite his sin some 20 years later. What a gift.

[52 : 41] That's because of who You are, God, and what You've done through our Savior. It's in Your name we pray, Jesus. Amen.