

For the Name of the Lord Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] All right, so please do grab your Bibles as we pick up the series through the book of Acts, and it's page 1115 in the Blackview Bibles, or Acts chapter 21, if you've got your own Bible.

But let me begin by asking you, I wonder what it is or who you would be willing to suffer for in life. And most people in the world would be, for example, willing to suffer work for the sake of income. I think most of us all have to do that at some stage, don't we? Or you might be willing to suffer a surgery for the sake of your health. Or for those parents, parents are often willing to suffer all sorts of things for the sake of their children, like mums who suffer childbirth for the sake of having their child, or parents who suffer the hard work of raising the kids and having to do all sorts of things as they get older, like teaching them to drive. That can be suffering, let me tell you. Or you might be willing to suffer the humiliation of being a Richmond and North Melbourne supporter at the moment, although I think they both won a game last week.

I wonder what it is that you would be willing to suffer for, or who? Grandchildren, perhaps, nieces or nephews. There are things, the point is, there are things and people in life that they're willing to suffer for. But I wonder if one of them is the Lord Jesus. Because as we'll see today in our passage, Paul is willing to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus. But first, let me do a bit of a brief recap, because it's been some time since we've looked at the book of Acts. The key verse in the book is chapter one, verse eight, where Jesus says to his apostles, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. And those three geographical regions basically map the book of Acts. This is how Luke writes it, according to those geographical regions. And so I've got the chapters next to those regions. And so as you can see, we are in the ends of the earth. And we see that particularly as Paul goes all over the known world at this time. He does three missionary journeys, doesn't he? And today, we actually pick it up at the end of his third journey, which ends when he goes to Jerusalem. But on his way to Jerusalem, the chapter before, he was at Miletus, and he called for the elders of the Ephesian church to come and join him at

Miletus. And he gave his farewell speech, which is basically the second half of chapter 20, just before our chapter. And so having farewelled those Ephesian elders, Paul now today continues on his journey to Jerusalem, where on the way, he receives two warnings and pleas. And so we're at the first one, point one, verse one. So Luke is writing, he says, after we had torn ourselves away from them, that is the Ephesian elders that they've just farewelled, we put out to sea and sailed straight to Koz. The next day we went to Rhodes and from there to Petara. We found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, went aboard and set sail. After sighting Cyprus and passing to the south of it, we sailed on to Syria. We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo. And notice here in verse one, Luke is writing and he says, we put out to sea. And so at this point of the journey, Luke is with Paul. This is eyewitness account that we are reading. And on our map, he sets off from the top left with the yellow dot, which is where he farewelled the Ephesian elders in chapter 20.

And he's travelling along the red line through the blue ocean down to the bottom right hand, the red dot. That's where Jerusalem is. And so following the red line, then he, a bit of a closer up, he leaves Miletus.

[4 : 21] The yellow dots moved from Miletus, anyway. And he goes to Petara, which is in the brown Lysia state. He kind of changes buses or boats, catches the 907 to Jerusalem. That's what he was doing. And so from here, he then travelled past Cyprus to the south of it. Cyprus is the top in the purple there. And he lands on that green strip of Phoenicia. Phoenicia was a coastal strip. It was part of the province of Syria, even though it's a different colour. It's part of Syria. And it's where the city of Tyre was. It's a bit hard to read it, but it's the end of the red arrow there. And so kind of in our terms, it would be like going to the Mornington Peninsula, which is part of Victoria and has the city of Rosebud in it.

Only for these guys, it's Tyre. Tyre was, though, a trade centre, which is why we read in verse 3 that the boat unloaded its cargo, because it was unloading things to sell at Tyre. It was a trade centre.

And so while the boat is unloading, Paul and Luke seek out the disciples, the Christians, in the city of Tyre. And no doubt to encourage them as Christians, because that's what Paul did everywhere he went. And in fact, they decided to stay seven days with them. So verse 4, we sought out the disciples there in Tyre and stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit, they urged, pleaded with Paul not to go to Jerusalem. And so here is our first warning and plea of our passage. For they urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Now verse 4 sounds like the Spirit told them that Paul should not go to Jerusalem. But it's not quite what verse 4 says. It says, through the Spirit, they urged Paul not to go. That is, the Spirit has told them something about what will happen in Jerusalem, which then causes them to plead with Paul. And we know what that something is that the

Spirit told them, because the Spirit has actually already told Paul in the previous chapter. In chapter 20, verse 22, the Spirit has compelled him to go to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to him there, only that the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me in every city.

And so just as the Spirit told Paul of suffering ahead of him, so it seems the Spirit has told these Christians in Tyre that suffering awaits him in Jerusalem. And so through that knowledge from the Spirit, which they presumably warned Paul about, they then plead with Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

[7 : 22] But the thing is, as that same verse on the screen says, Paul has been compelled by the Spirit to go.

And so like us, he must put God's will above even the best intentions of God's people and leave.

And so that's what they do. Verse 5 and 6. When it was time to leave, we left and continued on our way. All of them, including wives and children, accompanied us out of the city of Tyre.

And there on the beach where the boat was docked, we knelt to pray. After saying goodbye to each other, we went aboard the ship and they returned home.

This is a great picture of a heartwarming farewell, isn't it? Notice how everyone, including the wives and the children, they walk Paul and Luke out of the city.

[8 : 21] And then they all knelt and prayed for them. It's a great picture of gospel partnership, isn't it? There's clearly a bond of love and care between them, isn't there?

Even though they've only known each other for how many days? They stay with them for seven days. Yet already it's a clear bond of love and care between them.

But that's what the gospel does, doesn't it? Have you ever kind of met someone you've never met before and then you find out they're a Christian and immediately you have this affinity with them, this, you know, the kind of the barriers drop a bit and you can chat to them a bit more freely and there's this connection.

That's what the gospel does. It creates a connection, a bond of peace and love that we have. What's more, it's a great picture of how to support missionaries.

They not only showed Paul and Luke hospitality. I mean, they wouldn't have sent them to a hotel to stay, right? They would have stayed with one of the Christian homes there. They showed them great hospitality.

[9 : 29] And they all turned up and prayed for them to farewell them. And so when our CMS missionaries return, I don't know if you realize this, but you actually show them hospitality.

Because some of the offertory that you give goes to buying food for the CMS, for them to stay in the CMS flats at Montalbert.

And so we stock the fridge and the cupboards for them so that they felt welcome and supported. But when they do come to our Wednesday night prayer night to present, do them show up for them.

Do come and pray for them. And that's how we can support them. Well, having been prayed for, Paul now sets off and arrives in Caesarea, which is a bit hard to see on the screen, I realize, but it's the one above the red dot, one step from Jerusalem.

And it's here in Caesarea that we see the second warning and plea in our passage. So point to verses 7 to 9. He says, Here we're told that Philip is one of the seven.

[11 : 01] That is, he's one of the seven men that were chosen by the apostles to care for the widows back in chapter 6. You might remember that some of the widows were being overlooked in the food distribution.

And so the apostles said, Look, we need to focus on God's word and prayer. So we need to appoint some other people because we don't want these widows to be missed out either. And so Philip was one of those seven who was appointed.

And so he's not Philip the apostle. He's Philip the evangelist. Because he's particularly gifted at it. And again, we saw this back in Acts chapter 8, where he was preaching the gospel all over Samaria, including the Ethiopian eunuch.

Do you remember that story? Does that ring a bell? That was Philip, this Philip. And by the end of Acts chapter 8, he keeps traveling all around, preaching the gospel in all the towns, until he reached Caesarea, where we are today.

And it seems he settled down in Caesarea to raise a family. Because we're told of his four daughters. And no doubt, Philip himself would have kept preaching the gospel, even in Caesarea, to help grow the church.

[12 : 09] And his daughters, we're told, prophesied, which would have helped grow the church as well. Just as a bit of an aside, I'm not sure if you ever wondered about how prophecy works.

But prophecy in the New Testament is different to prophecy in the Old Testament. Prophecy in the Old Testament was done just by the prophets. And the prophet's word was equal to God's word.

Which is why when you read the Old Testament, the prophet says something, and then they add, thus says the Lord. So the prophet's word was the Lord's word.

But when Jesus came, he was the living word, is the living word. The word become flesh. The perfect word of God. The ultimate prophet.

And so he fulfilled all that role of Old Testament prophets. And changed prophecy. And so in the New Testament now, you don't have to have the specific role as a prophet to prophesy.

[13 : 08] You only need to have the spirit. That is, be a Christian. All Christians can prophesy. This is what Peter was talking about back on the day of Pentecost, when the spirit came.

He said, he quotes the book of Joel and says, in the last days, God says, I'll pour out my spirit on all people, not just the prophets. And your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions.

Your old men will dream dreams. And so all Christians can do it. But since it is not equal to God's word, then all prophecy must be tested with God's word.

And so that's what we read in places like 1 Thessalonians or 1 Corinthians on the screen there. It needs to be tested with God's word to make sure it's consistent. And so what is New Testament prophecy?

Well, it's a spontaneous word or revelation that the spirit calls to our mind so that we can share with others to strengthen and encourage them.

[14 : 08] So it's not the Sunday sermon, which is not spontaneous. At least you'd hope I do some preparation during the week when you. Nor is it usually involving predicting the future.

Though a person who has the gift of being a prophet might be able to do that, as we'll see in a moment. Rather, it's more about the spirit calling to mind some part of God's truth, which you then speak to the person over morning tea to encourage them, strengthen them.

It's when someone shares some struggle with you. And so then you suddenly remember a verse from the Bible about not being anxious about anything, but by prayer and petition, bring all our requests to God that the peace of God might guide our hearts.

And you might share that with them. And so you'll pray for them. In other words, I suspect we prophesy without even realizing we're doing it. Remembering something from God's word to encourage others.

Now, it's a big topic, but it's not the main point of the passage. So I don't want to say more about it now, but feel free to ask me about it later. Rather, it leads us to the second warning and plea of our passage in verse 10.

[15 : 20] For after we had been at Philip's place a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea coming over to us. He took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, the Holy Spirit says in this way, the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.

When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Here, a prophet named Agabus does predict the future for Paul in particular.

And like in our first reading from one Kings, this prophet also uses a visual aid, doesn't he? He gets the belt and ties his hands with it. He'd do great kids talks, though his message is pretty solemn, isn't it?

Like before, the message from the spirit is, suffering awaits Paul in Jerusalem. And so you can understand why the Christians then plead with Paul not to go, can't you?

And just like those Christians back in Tyre, that's what they do here. In fact, even Luke pleads with Paul not to go. Do you notice verse 17, verse 12, sorry. When we, Luke is writing, we, so he includes himself, heard this, we and all the people there pleaded with Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

[16 : 50] Now, God does guide us primarily by his word and spirit, but also he can guide us through his people, which is why when we're making big decisions in life, we don't just consult God's word and pray about it.

We can also ask those mature Christians around us, those who are mature in the faith and have life experience, and they can give us godly wisdom, can't they? But here, Paul ignores this advice from God's people, doesn't he?

He has listened to them before, like in chapter 17, when they sent him away from Berea, I think it was, he listened to them then, but not here. Why? Well, as we saw before, at the beginning of that verse, he is compelled by God's spirit to go to Jerusalem.

That's why. And so again, he must put God's will above the best intentions of God's people. God comes first, doesn't he?

God's will takes priority. Nor will he even let the knowledge that suffering, suffering awaits him, put him off from going. Because as we read in verse 13, which is like the punchline for our passage, Paul answered them, why are you weeping and breaking my heart?

[18 : 11] I am ready not only to be bound, like Agabus showed, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, the Lord's will be done.

After this, we started on our way to Jerusalem. You see, Paul knows it's the Lord's will for him to go. And he knows that this means suffering.

And so while his pastor's heart breaks, when he sees the tears of his fellow Christians, he says in verse 13, he's willing to be bound and even die for the name of the Lord Jesus.

You see, Paul is willing to suffer for Christ. And this is the big application for us this morning. We've seen a bit about how to support missionaries, what prophecy is, but this is the big application.

Are we willing to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus? Point three. Are sure we're not to go looking for it. After all, Paul did listen to others and leave places before, like Acts 17.

[19 : 14] But when he knew it was the Lord's will, he was willing to suffer for the name of Jesus, wasn't he? And so we're not to suffer needlessly, but willingly.

Of course, the Lord's will for us is not to go to Jerusalem, but it is to live as a Christian, openly, unashamedly. Even if that means we suffer, like if we suffer ridicule from others.

Even simple things, like if we say grace before we eat at a restaurant or a cafe. I remember doing that one time. I think it was up at Paul and Sons up the road. And I remember after I said amen, looking up and this person on the table down the other end had this look of disgust on their face.

I thought, oh, maybe I've spilled some food down the front of me. No, it's because I just said grace. And that was just too weird for them. Or it could be suffering rejection from family or coworkers.

Like one person I know who was deliberately left out of an email about going out for lunch with work colleagues because he is a Christian.

[20 : 25] Or from those from Muslim backgrounds, some of their family members don't want to see them anymore now that they're Christian. I might have mentioned one guy from our 1030 service.

His extended family back in his home country, it's his cousins actually, who literally want to kill him because he's converted to Christianity. And yet he won't change.

Or it could be suffering loss, like the loss of relationships. So a friend of ours would love to be married and she's had some guys interested, but they've been non-Christian. In fact, one guy really pursued her and he was a really, really nice guy.

They got on really well, but he just wasn't interested in Jesus. And so she ended it. Suffered loss of a marriage partner. Or it could be the loss of time to relax or sleep in on a cold, dark and wet Sunday morning.

Because you give it up to come to church or to serve Christ. Or it could be loss of money because you use your money to support gospel ministry. Whether it's suffering ridicule or rejection or loss, we're to be willing to suffer it for the name of Jesus.

[21 : 42] Why though? Why was Paul willing to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus? We're not told in our passage, but we do know elsewhere from the book of Acts, it's because there is no other name that saves.

He knows that there is no other name that brings hope. He knows there is no other name that is Lord of all, except the name of the Lord Jesus.

In other words, he knows Jesus is worthy of it. That's why he's willing to suffer for his name. You see, the more worthy the person, the more you're willing to suffer for them.

I like me for my daughter. Because the latest saga from her dog, whom I've now nicknamed Toby the Terror, is that he got my slipper. And now my slipper looks like this.

It's simply a toe warmer now. And yet I'm willing to suffer it because my daughter is worth it to me. Or a bit more seriously, here is Eric Bateman on your right there, not in the grey jacket, but with the beret on.

[22 : 57] Last Thursday, I don't know if you realise, but last Thursday was the 80th anniversary of the Normandy invasion. The invasion that led to the end of World War II. It began on DT, the 6th of June, 1944.

And one of the soldiers that signed up to serve in the British Navy was Eric Bateman. And last Thursday, he met Queen Camilla. And the headline of an article from last Thursday read, how D-Day veteran who brought Queen to tears with story of losing his childhood pal in the invasion, joined the Navy aged just 17 years old to do his bit for king and country.

He suffered loss, the loss of his mate and the pain of war. Why? Well, because of the worth of his king and country.

At the time, it was King George VI. But our king, Jesus, is Lord of all. And this king died to save us.

We didn't go to war for him. He went to war for us. To give us life eternal, to bring us into the world to come. And at the name of this king, every knee will bow and every tongue confess.

[24 : 20] you see, this king is worth so much, much more. And so we are to be willing to suffer for him even more.

You may be willing to suffer surgery for the sake of your health or the humiliation for being a Richmond or North Melbourne supporter. but for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are to be willing to suffer even more.

Let's pray we will. Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you for the worth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Help us to remember his worth that we might be willing to suffer for his name. not needlessly, but willingly. In his name we pray.

Amen.