

Paul is warned not to go to Jerusalem, yet goes anyway.

Was Paul in the will of God or not?

The key passages:

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. – Acts 20:22-24 (ESV)*

*“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...While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is how the Jews^[c] at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” ¹²**When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem.** ¹³Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” ¹⁴And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, “**Let the will of the Lord be done.**”” – Acts 21:4, 10-14 (ESV)*

*can also be translated “bound by the Spirit”

**The verb phrase is *elegon dia tou pneumatos* — “they were saying/telling through the Spirit.” The genuinely ambiguous question: did the Spirit reveal the *content* of coming suffering (accurate, predictive, prophetic information — which the text elsewhere clearly affirms, e.g., 20:23, 21:11), which the disciples then *applied* on their own initiative as “so don't go” — or did the Spirit itself issue a direct command not to go, which Paul then knowingly overrode?

Most scholars believe that “And through the Spirit” means that they were revealing that suffering was going to come to Paul because of Paul going to Jerusalem (and it did). And then the disciples added their own interpretation of this message, that because Paul would suffer “he shouldn't go”. The “he shouldn't go” wasn't part of the Holy Spirit's message – that was the people's addition. The expression “Let the will of the Lord be done” suggests that the people did not want Paul to suffer, but could see Paul clearly believed this was part of God's plan for him.

Paul's capture in Jerusalem, led to him going to Rome where he in prison shared the gospel – spreading the good news.

'The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome."' - Acts 23:11 (ESV)

Further, his imprisonment allowed him to write some of his epistles which became part of the Bible.