

A Willing Sacrifice

By Paris Reidhead*

Will you turn, please, to Acts, Chapter 21. I shall read the first 17 verses. You may feel that this portion is not as rich in meaning as you might wish. It is an account of travelling. Travelogues aren't generally too interesting when they are just from point to point, but I want you to listen very carefully; because in this portion is a message that will bring encouragement and guidance to you in perhaps a way that no other portion of the Word of God will do. Now you listen for that and see if you hear it as I read (Acts 21):

“And it came to pass, that after we had gotten from them” (Act. 21:1).

Now let us look at that for a moment. Let us go back to verse 36 in the previous chapter. Note, after we had gotten from them, for it says after we had escaped, we had gotten loose from them.

“And when Paul had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship. And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth. Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden. And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city; and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again. And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly” (Act. 20:36-21:17).

We will stop our reading there, and ask God to bless this portion to our hearts as we meditate upon it. Our Father, we thank Thee that this is Thy Word. Thou art the Author of it. Holy men only spake as they were moved by Thee, and Thou didst give to us Thy mind and will. And this portion comes to us as pilgrims, midway in our journey. And for every one of us, Lord, Thou hast a plan that stretches out into the future unknown to us, but known to Thee. And we ask that There shall come to our hearts as we meditate upon this truth preparation, Thine own inward preparation for all that is before us. We look to Thee now to speak to us through the Word, to guide the one who ministers, and to guide those to whom the truth comes, and anoint lips and ears, and in all glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. For His Name's sake. Amen.

The first thing you need to see in this portion is that if you are faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are going to have two things happen to you. There will be those who will be greatly blessed by your ministry, and by your life, and by your example, and by your prayers. And because of the fact that they have been recipients of blessing from God through you, they are going to be greatly concerned about all that pertains to you. They are going to be vitally interested in you. This is the way it ought to be. This is the way the Lord has established it. And understand that this is the manner in which it will come.

By the same token there will be those who will be the out and out and avowed enemies of the man of God, or woman of God. You will expect that if you are faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot be every man's friend. There has to be the necessity

for standing for something, and invariably if you stand for something you also are standing against someone who stands against the something for which you stand. Now this is invariable. This is inevitable. If you stand for something, inevitably there will be someone else who does not hold to that, and therefore you have got to recognize that if you stand for the Lord Jesus Christ as God's eternal Son, God come in the flesh, very God of very God, there will be others that do not share this with you.

Now it is not that you are opposing them, it is not that you are in opposition to them, because anyone that knows Jesus Christ cannot be bothered by petty little animosities. But by the same token he cannot be enticed by superficial little friendships. You have got to come to the place that to stand for the Lord Jesus Christ means that you are standing for Him and this will be interpreted by those who do not know and love Him that you are standing against them. It is thus that you find the Lord Jesus saying, Unless a man hate, if a man hate not his father and his mother. It is not a positive hatred that you have toward anyone, but it is a positive love for the Lord Jesus Christ which is interpreted by these whose allegiance and fellowship you have enjoyed before as being hatred for them. They have completely misunderstood the nature of your loyalty. They have completely misunderstood the nature of your commitment, and because they can only see through egocentric eyes all they can imagine is that you are opposing them. You are doing this to hurt me says the mother of the young fellow that makes his stand for the Lord Jesus Christ and leaves the religion that he has had.

I recall one day when in the Dinka Tribe in the Sudan we were stopped to pick up the school boys and bring them back to the school. And it was a shocking thing to see this mother come out from her little corn stalk fence and around her house, and just cling to this young boy Ding, about 12 or 13; and she said, O Ding, you hate me or you wouldn't go back to that school. And he said, No, Mother. I don't hate you. I love Jesus Christ, and He wants me to go. And so because I love Him... But she said, You say you love Him. How could He be good if He leads you to hurt me this way. She was interpreting his loyalty and obedience to Christ as a personal animosity toward her. Utterly wrong. You must expect that. Paul had that.

There were those that despised his name, that hissed when they heard it. There were those that pursued him from village to village, city to city, and wherever they came sought to stir up opposition to him. But Paul had cast his lot, he had committed himself, he had taken his stand with the Lord Jesus Christ, and he was not to be diverted, he was not to be changed. No siren voice of friendship was going to woo him out of the channel of obedience to the will of God on the rocks of disastrous failure. He was not going to allow himself thus to be deterred in his pursuit of the will of God for his life.

You must do the same thing. If you are to stand approved by the Lord Jesus Christ when you see Him face to face, it is absolutely imperative that you know what you believe, and you know why you believe it. And you are prepared to stand on that which you believe, and for that which you believe. In love, but today I am afraid we have misunderstood the meaning of the word love. It is interpreted as a kind of slushy, soft, sentimentality that you are to be nice to everybody, and to offend no one, and never to have any convictions, and that love now becomes kind of a soft soap that covers all forms, shape, and all delineations and definitions, and that we talk about the love which seemingly now has caused everything to become kind of a shapeless jelly, theologically, and practically, and ethically. And this is not love at all. This is a counterfeit. This is not Heaven love. Love for the Lord Jesus Christ puts upon your heart such a desire to please Him, to seek His honor, and to seek His glory, that you cannot do what is wrong, even though you should be interpreted as offending another. You cannot do it, not because you have antagonism toward the person, not because you are in opposition to what they are doing, but because you are seeking the glory of Christ and the interests of the Lord Jesus, and the honor of the Lord Jesus. And you love Him. Now love is not a slushy sentimentality. That is not what it is. It is a commitment of the will to the purpose to seek the best interests of, and the glory of Jesus Christ. This puts a skeleton of truth in the heart, and this puts a backbone of determination in the will, and one stands because this is what we believe, this is what we hold here, they are our convictions. You can view them, and measure them, and see them.

Now Paul had this, and of course because he had this he had, as we have seen in Ephesus, the opposition of the Jews and the Gentiles that were opposed to him. Oh, he had no end of difficulty. There is something else. It was not only opposition, but there were those whose hearts were met by him. And you show me someone that has no convictions, and does not understand truth, and is not prepared to stand for it and take the consequences of his belief, and I will show you one that probably has no enemies, but he also has very few spiritual friends that are prepared to have the exhibition of that deep love

and affection and friendship that is here surrounding Paul, as he takes leave of these that he has ministered to for these many months in Ephesus.

Now I do not believe that our goal, or our motive is to surround ourselves with those that care for us as they cared for Paul. That isn't it. But because they had been ministered to by Paul, they were prepared to recognize that he was the human instrument for blessing.

In the office of Pastor Mow, in the Grace Church in Clifton, I saw a lovely thing. I must confess that I did not actually break the 10th commandment, but I bent it until it got hot really. I didn't break it, but it bent. It was a picture of Sophie. Do you remember hearing about Sophie, one of the well-known members of the Gospel Tabernacle Church who from the time it was established until her death in 1919 was the first one to come with her missionary pledge every convention. God told her at the very beginning of this that it was to be a thousand dollars a year. You say, Well that's not very much, except this was 1888 when He told her that. And to have a thousand dollars today at the... today to have that amount of money today would take just about 10 thousand dollars, or even more, or at least ten thousand dollars to represent the buying power of a thousand dollars in 1888. Now remember that. It was tremendous. And she got this over a scrub board, and cleaning out offices, and praying it in. And when the invitation, or they would pass out the pledge cards, and then she would come Hallelujah! and burst down the aisle and present her pledge. This was the first one. This was the way it began. Well Sophie served the Lord.

And strangely enough she died the same week that Dr. Simpson¹ died. And she was buried from the church. There were not very many funerals from the church, and the same beautiful flowers that had been brought by friends from all over the country for the funeral of Dr. Simpson were here surrounding the little casket of Sophie. And when they had the service, somehow the one that was presiding mentioned the fact that God had used this little washer woman. And a man stood up, tears streaming down his cheeks, dignified well-dressed man. He said, Yes, God used her. I was one of these floating men on the streets of New York, and she saw me, witnessed to me and prayed for me. Another one stood up. Another one stood up. Still another. And still another. And others. And all over the church they stood, tears just streaming down their cheeks. She's the one that prayed for me, she's the one that witnessed to me; she is the one that told me of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I do not know the history. I do not know the past, but I do know that here was one that by her stand for the Lord Jesus, and her willingness to be thought odd, and even queer, and very eccentric at least, she had been the hands of the Lord Jesus an instrument of bringing many to Christ. Somehow along the way you are going to have to come to the place that some of the things you may have cherished are not as important as you thought they were. It is not important that everyone should think that you are just a paragon of politeness, or the paragon of reserve, of reticence. It may be that you are going to have to come to the place where you are just prepared to have a few enemies, if need be. Not that you will court it, not that you are going to encourage it, but that you are prepared to pay the price if need be in order that your life can be the instrument for the glory of Christ that He intends it to be.

Well you can go through life and offend no one, embarrass no one, nor yourself. But you can also end up simply to have left a hole that fills up as you leave it, and no one even realized you were there. But how different it is when you are prepared to stand for the Lord Jesus, to stand for His glory, stand for the truth in love, in faithfulness, in forcefulness, and commit it to Him, just commit it to Him.

Paul has ministered in Ephesus, and so he had to leave, just sort of peel off these dear ones that hated to see him go, knowing that they would see his face no longer. I would like to think that you are living not so much for the approval of the passing throng as you are for the day when you will see the Lord Jesus Christ face to face, and hear Him say, Well done, good and faithful servant. That ought to be the primary goal of your life.

But there is another word that is there, "Make to yourself friends by the mammon of unrighteousness that when you fail they shall receive you unto everlasting habitations" (Luk. 16:9). And wouldn't it be wonderful when you get home to glory that the

¹ Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

Lord would just have some to meet you there at the threshold, and they would look you and say, You know, through you I came to know the Lord Jesus, through your witness, through your testimony, through your prayers, through your life. I believe the Lord is going to see to it that that happens to you, I believe that. I do not know. I cannot guarantee that if you stand faithfully and forcefully for the Lord Jesus that you will have quite the same type of experience that Paul had here. But I can guarantee that when you see Him face to face you will hear Him say, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord" (Mat. 25:21). And really that is more important anyhow.

Now that is the first thing that this Scripture tells us, that it just is so vitally important, so absolutely essential that you have eye single to His glory, and you seek to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and minister to others as He gives you opportunity and gives you ability.

Now the next thing that you are going to see is this, that your friends will sometimes become your greatest hindrance to the fulfilling of the will of God. This is the case with Paul. I have heard it said, and have said it myself, With... You know, in years gone by, I remember in one particular situation I said, With friends like mine I don't even need enemies. They are sufficiently helpful that everything that an enemy can do they are doing very nicely as it is. And so, I didn't need any. I had enough friends that were taking care of all that. Well this was the case with Paul. Paul's greatest enemies were his dearest friends, because they so loved the man that they were prepared to so are the man for themselves and for others, and did not enter into an insight into what God was doing through the man. Therefore, it is necessary for you if you are going to serve the Lord Jesus Christ to be insulated against your well-meaning friends.

When I say, Insulated against them, I want you to understand exactly what is in my mind lest you should lose something very precious. We need fellowship. And we need counsel, and in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom, and there is guidance, and there is strength. This we need, and you are unwise if you do not seek the advice, and the help, and the counsel of your friends. This is one of the means of guidance. I believe that if you have crucial issues in your life, you ought to talk with those who have experience in the things of the Lord, and share with them that which is upon your heart, and secure from them the best guidance they can give. But, having gotten it, and having weighed it, and having considered it, you then must commit yourself to Him, and obey Him; because if you have two friends and one views your situation from one point of view and says, Don't; and someone else views it from another point of view and said, Do, you cannot possibly please both of them. And yet they both may have made a contribution that is important to you, and you need to see what was in the mind of each. Then obey the Lord.

So you cannot depend upon the counsel of your friends. Paul had friends that loved him. Now the Spirit of God had spoken to Paul, telling him that it was imperative that he went to Jerusalem, but by the same way the Spirit of God spoke to others concerning Paul, telling him that at Jerusalem he was going to suffer these many and dreadful things. They interpreted the revelation that came from the Holy Spirit concerning Paul's going as a warning to Paul not to go, and it was not to be so understood. But it is a warning to you and to me to know the Lord well enough to know His will clearly enough that even in the face of the expostulations and entreaties of our dearest friends, when we are sure we know the way and will of God, to walk in it. Otherwise you are going to be a pawn in the hands of those that love you too much. And to be loved too much is to be loved to the place that you are deprived the privilege of obedience to God because of the protective interests of your friends.

It is imperative, therefore, that you should recognize that Paul was being put into a situation that would warn me and warn you. Now I believe that we should listen to reproof, we should listen to rebuke, we should listen to entreaty, we should listen to advice, and we should listen to criticism. But you see there are some things for which you will be criticized, but you have to do it anyway, because it is right, and in the eyes of the critics it may be wrong. But in the eyes of God it is right.

This was true of our Lord Jesus; there were things in His life for which He was severely criticized, but He had to do it, because it was the Father's will. He also had to accept the criticism. And there are some things which will be true in your life this way. Now I am not speaking of moral diversion, I am not speaking of violation of principle. The Spirit of God is never going to lead you to violate clear principles of the Word of God. He won't lead you to do it. He may permit it, but He does not lead you to do it, and with it will come the punishment that always comes from disobedience. We are not talking now about being led of God

contrary to the revealed will and plan of God. We are talking about those issues which have no moral, no intrinsically moral quality to them. And therefore you friends sometimes are going to say, Now don't, don't do this.

I have told you of my own experience in the past. Every decision that I made as a student, and in my early years of ministry, half my friends thought I had lost my mind and the other half I guess thought I was too stubborn to care for their advice. But when in 1937 I left Bible School, my teacher said, This man has lost his mind. He is quitting the ministry. He'll never be anywhere, go anywhere, or have a ministry. But I knew that God was leading me out of school at that time. I knew it, and I had to do it regardless of what was said. But He also led me back to school, and then when in 1940 I went to college and received a call to the First Baptist Church of Minnesota, the President on the last day that I attended Chapel took the Chapel unexpectedly, and he spoke about, "He that putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is not worthy of me" (Luk. 9:62). And saw me in the hall afterward and said, Brother, I hope you got the message this morning, that I would put my hand to the plough of college training, and was looking back, and he despaired of anything. Well I knew in spite of all the fact, that it was not a course that I would prescribe or advise, this was what God wanted me to do, and I had to do it.

And then in 1942 when I had finished the ministry, and had resigned, and was considering going back to college, and the Spirit of the Lord definitely led me after a day of waiting on him in prayer to join myself for months of ministry with Pastor Fettler, Pastor M. Fettler, dear Dr. Riley called me into his office and looked at me and shook his head and said, My son, you have certainly lost your mind. And I said, Why Doctor? And he said, Because you are going with this man. And I said, But he knows God. And I said, Yes, I know he knows God, but that is no reason for your going. But I said, God led me. And he said, There is nothing I can do. You will have to go. Well I went. And I wouldn't give anything in the world for those 8 months that I spent with him, because there was a man that loved me enough to whip me for Jesus' sake. My parents and my friends and everyone thought that it was utterly ridiculous that anyone that had a ministry as a pastor would be willing to be a bootblack and a bag totter, and a chauffeur, and a general factotum. They had just thought I had lost my mind to go with this mad Russian. But this man knew God. He knew God, and I was desperate to know Him as he knew Him. And I knew that if I was willing to carry his bag, and black his shoes, and do the tasks that were there, there would be times when he would talk to me. And I can remember as we would be driving down the road he would say, Pullover at the side will you. And we would park there, and he would bow his head and he would put his finger up against his nose. And he would lay his finger up against his nose like taking a sword out of a hilt, and just putting it, and then he would take it down. And every time he would say something he would go like this, and then he would let it rest again. And he would whip me with that long finger of his like and I would sit there, and tears would just run down my cheeks. You say, Why? Did he hurt you? Sure he hurt me. But I deserved to be hurt. I was wrong. Do you know what I was crying about? Because I was hurt? No. I was crying because here was a man that God had wonderfully used in great revivals in Russia, that loved me, the little boy from the country, enough to whip me for Jesus' sake. Nobody else had ever cared that much. And God knew that I had to have it, and I couldn't get it in any school in the country.

What I am trying to say is this, that I cannot engineer your life. God has a plan for your life. I am willing to give you the best counsel, and the best advice, of my experience in the Word, but you have got to relate yourself to the Lord and find God's will for your life and walk in that will. You are going to make mistakes undoubtedly. But if your heart is pure with only one purpose, to glorify Him, God will be pleased to even turn the mistakes to His praise. And your friends will seek to dissuade you from the will of God, because they see in it something that is going to hurt you, and because they love you they want to protect you.

Now you notice I said this does not involve moral diversion. This is another matter entirely. The Spirit of God never leads you... There was no moral significance to these months in fellowship with this dear man. It was not a moral issue at all. It was a practical procedure for the best way of ministry. Dear Dr. Riley did not think it was wise for a young man that he had helped so as he had helped me to waste his opportunities in going with someone such as this. But God knew. And I had to accept God's guidance in my life as much as I love Dr. Riley, and I wanted to. You see I just could not serve Dr. Riley. I had to serve God. And this is what you have got to do. You have got to serve God. And friends as loving as they may be, and their counsel as valuable as it may be, must be a factor. And when you know this is the will of God, this is the way of God, this is the Word of God, and you have got to stand on it, in love and patience, cost what it will.

Now that is what Paul tells us. His friends would have kept him from the will of God.

Now God was not only teaching Paul something, and doing something for Paul, but He was doing something for the friends, you know. This was a period of relative peace. But do you know who was emperor, or just coming to the throne in Rome at this time? A gentleman by the name of Nero, not such a pleasant fellow as one might have hoped. And because of Nero there was going to break out a persecution, really the first of the great persecutions, and perhaps the fiercest of the persecutions against the church in some sense, incidentally over Paul.

You know how it all started, don't you? Tradition tells us Paul went to Rome in the prison there in the palace, kept in the palace. One of Nero's favorite concubines came to see Paul and seek him. He talked to her and he witnessed to her, and she came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. There was a church in Caesar's household. You remember that? Well she had been brought out of death into life, and when Nero came back from one of his state royal trips it wasn't the same woman he had left. And this made Nero so angry that he dispensed with all the due process of law and all the protections that had been afforded Paul, and his execution so pleased the other people, and laid the way for the persecution that was to break out against the Church throughout the entire Roman Empire.

Now God knew what was going to happen to the church, and He knew that if at this time in Asia the principle was protect yourself that it was going to completely destroy everything that He was doing. And so He allowed each one of these prophets and prophetesses to come to Paul and say, This is what is going to happen in Jerusalem. This is what is going to happen out here. This is what is going to take place. So that after Paul had gone, they would be able to say, Even though he knew what was going to happen he set his face like a flint and went straight forward. And the church was prepared by this man's faithfulness for what was going to come, and what could have been tragic apostasy became glorious triumph because this most honored of His servants had in every place that he stopped a public declaration made by the Holy Ghost, The man that goes to Jerusalem is going to be bound, going to be persecuted. These things are going to happen to him. What are you going to do? Paul, oh Paul, don't go. Don't get hurt, Paul, said his friends.

Hurt? God has told me I must go. I cannot change because of personal danger. I cannot change because of the possibility of suffering; I can't alter my convictions to protect my skin. I serve God. And if this is going to happen to me in Jerusalem, God could keep it from happening. And if He allows it to happen it is in His will and I accept it, and I am going straight forward.

Now the question you have to ask yourself, Are you serving God as long as it is comfortable? Are you serving God as long as you are honored? And if you are told by the Spirit of God that if you proceed in the course that you know to be the course of obedience it is going to involve suffering. Are you so concerned about the wholeness of your skin that you say, Oh, I couldn't do that. I might be hurt. This might cost me my life, and you have got to live. Oh, do you? Do you have to live? That is a good question to settle early. Do you have to live? And the answer, of course, the only proper, rational, Scriptural answer is, Of course you do not have to live. Multitudes of people have chosen to die rather than to live ignobly. Multitudes of people have chosen to die rather than to live at the cost of their convictions. Life is not that sweet to be held at the cost of that which you hold to be dearest in the world. And so the Spirit of God allowed every church where Paul visited to have this message, He is going to suffer, This man is going to suffer, this man is going into bonds, this man is going into persecution, this man is going into debt. And the church immediately says, O Paul, don't go. Don't go, Paul. Don't get hurt. It is wonderful to believe in Christ, but don't get hurt. It is more wonderful not to be hurt. But you can't suffer for Christ, Paul. You can't lose your freedom, Paul. You can't lose your life. That's too important. Life, freedom. Paul was the instrument of preparing the church for what was coming. Freedom, life, protection? No. God has told me to go. And after he is gone, these elders gather together.

Wasn't it interesting when Agabus came and took Paul's sash and tied him. Paul never challenged it. He said the Spirit witnesses in every place. He said, I am going into bonds. And he went. What was it he said to one of the elders? What were the words of the Apostle? I just forget now. What is it that he said? And Paul... Then one of them said, Don't you remember, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart. Don't do that. I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the Name of our Lord Jesus." And here is a man that because of his love for Christ is so consuming, so passionately powerful that he can teach the whole church through Asia every place he stops, You cannot change your course to protect your life, you cannot change your course to preserve your life, you cannot become expedient and opportunistic about the things of God. You

have got to find out what is true. You have got to become convinced that something is true, and then you have got to stand on it and die if need be, but you cannot change to protect yourself.

I have told you of the tremendous challenge that I have received from reading the book The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer². I was introduced to it first by an article in the Alliance Witness years ago, entitled, They Hanged Their Prophet, in which Dr. Tozer³ eulogized Bonhoeffer, by telling us that in the time of Germany's departure from morality and nobility under the evil days that fell upon it there stood a man who said, No, No, No. You cannot go there, you cannot do that. They put him in prison, and from the prison they said, No, to the face of leaders, and No to the face of preachers, and No. Finally they said, We'll silence him. We'll hang him. And on the trestle, he said, No, No. And his last words were No to a generation that had forgotten the heritage that it had received and the pit from which it had been ransomed. And he has come to his own though in the years past, and today young men that are earnest and thinking and young women that are sincere and desirous of knowing the truth will pick up that book. They say, This man never wrote a book to get his name in the papers. This man never wrote a book in order to become famous. This man never wrote a book that he could peddle in his meetings. He was not a merchandizer of words. This man took the quill of truth, sharpened it in prayer, and dipped it in the Blood of his own heart, and he said, This is truth. For this I stand, and for this I die. You read a book like that that cost a man his life, you are not just sharing in somebody's merchandized and peddled ideas. That is why when people read it takes bold of them and shapes them.

And the Apostle Paul... If the Apostle Paul... Listen. If the Apostle Paul had wavered when Agabus said, You are going to be bound, I believe his name would be a shame in the church instead of the honored one we hold it to be. The Spirit of God said, I want you to know that even in the face of known danger, and known difficulty, and known persecution, and known death, when you know something is right you go ahead, just go ahead. That is what God is trying to say to you. I do not know what the future holds for you. I do know who holds the future. And I know that that future that is yours can include suffering. It can include opposition. It can include persecution. We have been told, and I have alluded to it in the past, that the time may well come in my generation, 10 to 20 years, when preaching such as I am doing will be allowed only to those who have their union card, and are approved by the proper, Approving bodies. There are those of us who are just so constituted that we have made up our minds in advance that we are not going to do it, not going to do it.

My father used to say, Son, as you can serve God behind a pulpit, and be true to your convictions, and preach what you believe, do it. But whenever you find that you are behind that desk just to make a living, get out, run, and run. And in his inimicable and very earthy way, he said, You know what you had better do? I said, What, Dad. He said, Go down to the tinsmith and get fitted with a tin beak and go out and beak with the chickens, but don't preach for a living. Don't preach for a living. What did he mean? He meant that there is always a turning point in everyone's life when he stands on the grounds of opportunity to use to protect. And the Apostle Paul said, No. I am going to be bound. I know that. God has told me. I am going to suffer persecution. I know that. I may die. I know that. But you see, God told me to go. I am going to go. I am going to go.

Now this is what is going to happen to you, because the future is not so bright that there is room now... You see, if it could be settled by you now that you have committed yourself to truth and to Christ who is the truth, and there is no deviation, no change, no possibility of apostasy as far as your heart is concerned. You are fixed, you are settled, and not like Demas who loved this present evil world, like Fidelus, and Hermongenes who loves position and honor, nor as Paul was tempted to protect his life, you simply set this as a settled matter, and you are going to go ahead. Now this is what God is asking for and this is what God is telling us, that this man became the forerunner of that whole host of martyrs that stood for Jesus Christ, even though they knew it would cost them their lives. We know that the blood of the martyrs through the centuries have been the seed of the church.

But do you know what the word martyr means, Martyros? It means Witness, that is all. After that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, ye shall receive power and you shall be martyros... You will be witnesses. That is what it says. You will be witnesses. And a martyr was a witness. A martyr was someone that had seen something, and experienced something, and said what he had seen, and stood for what he had experienced, and he could not be changed to protect his life. He could not be silenced to

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) A German Lutheran pastor.

³ Aiden Wilson Tozer (1897-1963) Pastor and Author. Christian and Missionary Alliance

protect his life. He could not be deviated or twisted by any little maneuvering. He had gone too far with God. He had gone too bright out of the tawdry things of the world. He has been somewhere, and nothing else had meaning, and nothing else had value and he was a witness. Isn't it amazing that in the New Testament the word witness became the word in our English, Martyr. The same word, just a transliteration. That is all it is. They had something they had seen. They had been somewhere. And they couldn't change. They couldn't be bought.

This is what this word tells us, that you have committed yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ in such a manner, in such a degree, in such a purpose, inflexible purpose that you are going to go on through with God, cost what it may, lead where it may, involve what it may. You are settled. Oh, that God will do that for us! That is all. Just that. Going to stand. And the sneer. You know, most Christians never have felt the lash. Paul had beatings with rods, 39 stripes, 40 save 1, three times. Not a one of us have ever had a rubber hose or a whip on our backs for Christ that I know of. You know what makes us fold up our tents and silently steal away? When somebody says, Hm, she's a Christian, with a sneer. We are mortally wounded, run into the closet and shut the door, and say, They are persecuting me. Deep wounds that never heal because they curl the lip and say, He's a Christian. A great and noble sort are we.

Oh, that God will give us that kind of a relationship with Jesus Christ that is not out trying to court problems, or make enemies, or encourage opposition, but simply has fallen so completely in love with Christ and see Him so clearly, and committed ourselves to Him so wholeheartedly that we can walk into the face of all that may be before us and saying, Here I stand, here I live, here I'll die. I have seen Him. Paul went to Jerusalem, and he taught the church, that the criterion of guidance is not protection, but the will of God. Are you prepared to accept that the criterion of guidance in your life is not your advancement, nor your promotion, nor your protection, but the will of God, the glory of God.

Now it is going to settle a lot of issues that will come in the future if you just fix that tonight. You do not have to go beyond the room. You do not have to go to a prayer room. But if in your heart while you listen you say, Yes, I am committed. I do not understand all it means, I certainly cannot know all it is going to cost, but I know that this relationship that I have to Jesus Christ is not some little whimsy, it is not some little fantasy, it is not some imagined loyalty, but I have seen Him, I have known Him, and He has told His love for me, and the glory of His Presence shall be Mine eternally. This is what I mean. It is a relationship with Him that brooks no possible turning back. The old Methodist Camp Meeting song was, "I am going through, Lord. I'm goin' through. I don't know what others may do, but I'm going through, Lord. I'm goin' through."⁴ That is what Paul is saying to the church, that is what he is saying to you tonight. "I'm goin' through, Lord. I'm goin' through."

Let us bow our heads in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, we stand pilgrims midway in our journey, and probably the best of it has been past, in terms of comfort and ease. A rising tide of antagonism to the Lord Jesus Christ, open disavowal of the truth we love, singling out the Christians in so many ways for ridicule, mocking the Christ we love and the faith we hold. In the name of science often, in the name of culture, in the name of fashion. Oh, how glad our Father we are that we have met Him, we have seen Him. When it pleased Thee to reveal Thy Son in us something happened that so captured us, so bought us, so bound us that the commitment we have made to Him is not just a fair weather friendship, as long as He is useful and profitable. We did not come to the Lord Jesus to get on a carousel for a pleasant little ride of entertainment. We have seen Him, Father. We have seen Him standing on the sea of glass. We have seen Him with the open Book in His hand. We have seen Him with the throngs of angels gathered before Him and crying, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts. We have seen Him with the redeemed of the ages singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, Unto Him who loved us and washed us in His Blood, and made us to be kings and priests unto God. We have seen Him as the seven elders and the beasts gathered around His throne and say, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive riches, and honor, and glory, and dominion, and majesty, and power, and praise, now and forever" (Rev. 5:12). We have seen Him, our Father, with the revelator who heard a voice behind him and turned to see One standing in the midst of the candlestick, like unto the Son of Man, with a head like wool, and eyes a flame of fire, and out of His mouth went a two-edged sword, girt about the paps with a girdle of gold, feet shining as brass in the fire. O God, we with John would fall at His feet, dead, dead to our own plans, dead to our own purpose, dead to our own ambitions, dead to our right to

4 "I'm Going Through" By Herbert Buffum, 1904.

our rights, and dead, Lord, to all the instincts of self-preservation that would cause us to abandon Him who died for us. We would lay at His feet, Lord, dead, crucified with Him, only to feel His touch and hear Him say, Rise, stand upon thy feet, not in our strength but His, not for our purpose but His, not for our plans but His, not to use Him, but to have Him use us, not to be glorified by Him, but to have Him glorified by us. O God, might it be that if it should be prophets and prophetesses should say that at some Jerusalem ahead of us are bonds and death that learning from this man his firm purpose, though dissuaded by those dearest to him, that he would go through, grant that this may come to our hearts that iron may enter our souls, and that our love for the Lord Jesus may become so patiently real that all the little winds that would blow us off course, and all the sirens voices that would lure us to our doom will be refused by us, and the hand that holds the tiller will faithfully aim again right through the channels of destruction to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. To that end seal the impressions and purposes of this evening, bind the truth upon our hearts, and let the example of this one who said, Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ, so move and control us that we too will go through into Thy full will and perfect purpose and fulfillment of all Thy plan for us, cost what it may, mean what it will. Use our lives, our Father, as Thou dost please, for the glory of Him who loved us and so washed us in His Blood, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

With our heads bowed and our eyes closed, this is a moment of contemplation, a moment of thought. I think it is so appropriate that you should just silently raise the right hand of your heart, of your heart, not your hand. Slip the right hand of your heart into the nail pierced hand of the Lord Jesus, and in the words of that old song, "Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand."⁵ Just go through with Him, cost what it may, mean what it will. Perhaps it will give you a new courage, a new confidence as you go to your school room tomorrow, or you go to the office, wherever it may be, your path may lead. I am going through, Lord, I'm going through. Let us stand for the Benediction.

"Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before His presence with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and honor, majesty and praise, now and forever. Amen" (Jud. 1:24-25).

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, April 28, 1963 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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⁵ "Precious Lord, Take my Hand" Music by George N. Allen (1844) Words by Thomas A. Dorsey, 1932.