

ACTS 20-22 – Paul in Prison

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Reflection & Discussion Questions

The early church seemed to have a well-developed theology of suffering

The modern American church tends to have an avoidance approach to it.

*What are some of the things we do or have that lessen suffering?

Paul valued knowing and sharing Jesus more than his own life

Read and discuss Acts 20:17-24 (NIV)

17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18 When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19 I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. 20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. 22 “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

Acts 21:10-15 (NIV)

10 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 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.’” 12 When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, “Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” 14 When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, “The Lord’s will be done.”

15 After this, we started on our way up to Jerusalem.

*What do we learn from Paul in these passages?

*If Paul believed bad things were going to happen, why was he not bothered by the warnings? What did Paul believe that enabled him to continue on?

*What would it take to value knowing God and the Gospel more than comfort?

To live this way, we need to THINK differently about suffering

We are the only people who worship a God who suffered too

*What is dangerous about just teaching or believing that God will end your suffering?

*Why does having a suffering God change everything?

*What can we pursue instead of pursuing less suffering?

To live this way, we need to ACT differently when we suffer

We can believe that He is with us in our suffering, focus on step-by-step obedience, and stop suffering alone.

*How can we practically remember that He wants to be with us in the midst of our suffering?

*Is there a time that you were able to choose obedience and daily dependence on God while suffering? What did that look like?

*How does suffering force us to realize we need others?

*What is the Holy Spirit saying to you about suffering? Is there a place you need to think or act differently? Is there help you need to humble yourself to ask for?