

October 9, 2022 by Steve Brandon



Willing to Die

Acts 21:1-14

1. Tyre (verses 1-6): “Don’t Go!”

2. Caesarea (verses 7-14): “Don’t Go!”

Let me tell you about John Allen Chau. He grew up in a Christian home. As a child he loved adventure, camping, hiking, traveling. He once wrote, “Why do I hike? To see but a brief glimpse of the glory of the Creator.” Such a perspective shows his heart for the Lord.^[1]

He looked up to some missionary heroes, David Livingstone, who did some pioneering Christian missionary work in Africa. He also looked up to Jim Elliot, who gave his life in reaching the Wadrani Indians in Ecuador. He grasped the missionary spirit. During his young years, he took missionary trips to Mexico, South Africa, and Iraq.

But one people group attracted his attention: the people of North Sentinel Island. The Sentinel Islands are found in the Bay of Bengal, southeast of India. They belong to the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal, under the administration of the Indian union territory. North Sentinel Island itself is very small, approximately 4 miles in diameter. There is a narrow, white-sand beach that encircles the island. Beyond the beach, the entire island is covered in forest. From best estimates, there are only 50 to 400 people on the island.

John Allen Chau was intrigued by those who lived on the island people. You might well ask yourself why he was so intrigued by such a small island in the middle of the Bay of Bengal. The answer lies in the uniqueness of the people on the island: they live in isolation from the world. They can live in isolation because the Indian authorities recognize their desire to be left alone. Since 1956, the Indian government has made it illegal to come within three nautical miles of the Island. as it dangerous to do so.

For instance, in 1981, the MV Primrose, a cargo ship, ran aground on the island. The crewman witnessed the men on the beach carrying spears and arrows. They had to be airlifted out for their own safety. After a 2004 earthquake and subsequent tsunami, the Indian authorities wondered how they inhabitants of the island were faring. So, they took a helicopter to survey the island. The natives shot arrows and threw spears and stones at the helicopter. In January 2006, two Indian fisherman were fishing illegally too close to the island. They were killed by the Sentinelese people. And India has refused to prosecute the Sentinelese for killing people, since it is illegal to even visit the island.

Well, John Allen Chau, was filled with missionary zeal and wanted to bring the gospel to those on North Sentinel Island. This was his life-long goal. With the help of various missionary training facilities, he trained to reach tribal peoples with the gospel.

On November 15, 2018, at 26 years of age, John attempted his first contact with the tribe. John paid some local fisherman \$350 to bring him close to the island. Early in the morning, John made his first trip to the Sentinelese. John paddled toward the island on a kayak alone, while the fisherman waited for him to return.

He brought two large fish and planned to give them as gifts. When he came close to shore, he met two men with bow and arrows in hand, who rushed upon him. John hollered to them, “My name is John. I love you and Jesus loves you. Jesus Christ gave me authority to come to you. Here is some fish!”

Now obviously, they didn’t understand his English, and when they approached within shooting distance, John retreated and paddled as fast as he could back to the boat and recorded his encounter in his journal.^[2]

After a bit of rest, he returned a second time with some more fish and some gifts (scissors, tweezers, safety pins, fishing line and hooks, cordage, rubber tubing, and a new Speedo towel) to give to them. This time they were friendly enough for him to come to shore, and gave them the fish and gifts. and began preaching to them, beginning in Genesis.

But the Sentinelese took his kayak and a little boy shot at him with an arrow. The arrow hit the Bible that he was holding in front of him. John grabbed the arrow shaft as it broke in his Bible. He felt the arrow head, it was metal, thin and very sharp. He backed off and waded in the water and soon swam the mile or so to his waiting boat.

He wrote the following in his journal:

Although I now have no kayak, I’m grateful that I still have the written word of God. ... The plan now is the rest and sleep on the boat and in the morning to drop me off and then I walk along the beach toward the same hut I’ve been giving gifts to. ... I’m scared. ... Also frustrated and uncertain. ... Lord let your will be done. If you want me to get ... killed with an arrow then so be it. I think I could be more useful alive though, but to You, God, I give all the glory whatever happens. I DON’T WANT TO DIE! ...

Watching the sunset and it’s beautiful – crying a bit ... wondering if it’ll be the last sunset I see before being in a place where the sun never sets. Lord is this island Satan’s last stronghold where none have heard or ever had a chance to hear Your Name?

Lord, strengthen me as I need your strength and protection and guidance ... Whoever comes after me to take my place, whether it's after tomorrow or another time, please give them a double anointing and bless them mightily.

The next morning, November 16, 2018 was that last day that John was seen alive. He asked the fisherman to drop him off alone on the island, and return later in the day to pick him up. When the fisherman returned, they saw the Sentinelese tribesman dragging John's body across the beach and burying it. When the fisherman subsequently returned to tell the authorities of John's death, they were promptly arrested, as what they did was highly illegal. and the Indian authorities never attempted to retrieve John's body.

Now, since his death, people have debated his efforts. Some have called him a martyr and a hero. Others have called him a fool. The Voice of the Martyrs have recognized him as a Christian martyr. celebrating his life on June 29th on "The Day of the Christian Martyr." In justifying this recognition, a press release from the Voice of the Martyrs contains the following:

Indian authorities called Chau's evangelistic efforts to the unreached Sentinelese tribe on North Sentinel Island, a 'misplaced adventure in a highly restricted area.'

But a closer look reveals Chau's Christ-like compassion, extensive training and preparation, and clear-headed conviction of his calling to the Sentinelese people.^[3]

On the other hand, many thought that John Chau's actions were foolish. Even his father believed that his son was self-deceived and delusional. His father had confronted him about his obsession with the Sentinelese people, and told him not to go to them. He said, "Extreme Christianity" pushed John toward a "not unexpected end."^[4] "In my observation, he was selectively collecting whatever preachers' doctrines were in favor of his self-directed, self-governed, self-appointed plan."^[5]

I believe that one of John's close friends, Justin Graves, put it best. He said, "What he did here was not wise. ... I respected John and his passion, but this cannot be a role model to emulate, but a lesson to learn from."^[6] That sums up my sentiments exactly. I appreciate his zeal and passion to live for Christ. Yet, I think that there was a better way for him, involve more people, more counsel. not to be a maverick and do it all on his own.

Now, I tell you John Chau's story because there are some similar elements to his story and the story apostle Paul in our text this morning. Both of them were willing to die for the gospel. Both of them had people in their lives telling them not to go into the danger. Many have questioned whether or not their deeds were wise. We find these things in Acts 21:1-14.

In this text, we see Paul, heading to Jerusalem, where he knows that he will face "imprisonment" and "afflictions" (Acts 20:23). We will also see Paul's friends telling him not to go to Jerusalem. Paul will tell them, "I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). So, let's read our story.

Acts 21:1-14

And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 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 we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo. 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, 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.

When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, 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 stayed with him. He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied. 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, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then 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." And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

The title of my message this morning is "Willing to Die." It comes from verse 13, when Paul answered them, "I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

"Willing to Die" is really the posture that all Christians should take in our lives. When Jesus spoke to his disciples he said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). The cross was an instrument of death. Jesus was saying, "If you want to follow me, you need to be willing to die." Catch that, "If you want to follow Jesus, you need to be willing to die."

Now, this doesn't mean that every follower of Jesus has to go to the Sentinelese people with the gospel. But it does say that every follower of Jesus must be willing to die for his name. The world may see it as a foolish. But as Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

This what John Chau's perspective. A few months before his death, he said, "I want my life to reflect obedience to Christ and to live in obedience to Him. I think that Jesus is worth it. He's worth everything."

This is Paul's perspective as well. In Acts, chapter 20, when speaking to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, Paul said something similar. In verse 24, he said, "But 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.”

Paul was ready to suffer and to die for Jesus Christ. Are you? This is really the question of our text this morning. Are you, “Willing to Die”?

Well, our text this morning breaks down into two sections. The first gives some travel details, and then Paul’s experience at Tyre. The second gives some more travel experiences, and then Paul’s experience at Caesarea. So, let’s first look at ...

1. Tyre (verses 1-6): “Don’t Go!”

Verse 1 begins by giving us some travel information.

Acts 21:1

And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara.

Now, by this time, I trust that you remember that Paul is on his 3rd missionary journey. Some years before, he began his journey from the great church in Antioch, He traveled through southern Galatia. Landing in Ephesus, where he spent three years evangelizing and teaching the disciples. Then, he continued on to Troas, and then into Macedonia, where he spent time encouraging the disciples (Acts 20:2). Paul was also collecting funds for the poor Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. Eventually, he made his way down to Achaia, where he remained in Corinth for a few months (Acts 20:3). He returned home by the same way that he came. up through Macedonia. Back to Troas, where Eutychus fell out of the window. Then, on to Miletus, where he said his parting words to the elders who came to see him from Ephesus.

Then, verse 1 takes us through Cos, and Rhodes and Patara. Cos and Rhodes were islands off the shore. Patara was a large commercial city with a nice harbor, where commercial ships would often dock. Apparently, they didn’t spend much time in any of these places, as Paul had his eyes set on Jerusalem, where he wanted to arrive before Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

At Patara, they found a merchant ship that was heading east to Phoenecia. They set sail to arrive in Tyre (which is in Phoenicia). The details are told in verses 2 and 3.

Acts 21:2-3

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 we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo.

There was a church in Tyre. It was established years before Paul even launched his first missionary journey. It was established as a result of the persecution that arose after Stephen’s death. You can read about it Acts 11:19. Paul knew about this church and as the ship was unloading its cargo, he sought out the disciples from the church. This is what we read in verse 4.

Acts 21:4

And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days.

It sort of reminds me of the time when Yvonne’s parents gifted us a cruise to Alaska. It set out from San Francisco. The cruise ship meandered its way through the islands, making stops along the way, at Juneau, Skagway, and Ketchikan before finally ending up in Victoria, British Columbia.

I think it was when we were in Skagway, that Yvonne and I “sought out the disciples.” We grabbed a phone book and looked up the churches in Skagway. We found one where the pastor had gone to the Master’s Seminary (where I went to Seminary). We found the address to his house. We walked across the small town to his house and knocked on the door.

We just wanted to encourage him in his ministry. We had a close friend who had pastored a church on one of the nearby Alaskan islands. So, we had a little taste of what ministry was like on such an island. It’s lonely and difficult. We spent some time with him, and returned to the ship.

This is what Paul did. He “sought out the disciples” (verse 4). But rather than visiting for an afternoon, Paul remained, “for seven days.” During that time, he certainly told his story of his missionary adventures, out to Macedonia and back. he certainly told them of his fund-raising effort to help the poor in Jerusalem. And during that time, those in Tyre were discerning what Paul was doing. He was going into Jerusalem, where he might be killed! They were counseling him against going.

Acts 21:4

And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

This is the message that he was receiving in Tyre: “Don’t Go!” Certainly, those in Tyre were fearful of Paul’s life. Like John Chau had written in his journal, they certainly believed that Paul would be more useful alive, than dead. So, they were “urging him not to go.” The idea here is that they repeatedly told him not to go. Yet, Paul was constrained by the Holy Spirit to go.

Back in Acts 19:21, we read of Paul’s travel intentions: “Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome.’” During his speech to the Ephesian elders, we read much the same thing: “And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testified to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me” (Acts 20:22-23).

What we see here in Tyre, is yet another example of the Holy Spirit testifying to Paul that “imprisonment and afflictions” awaited him. I believe that’s the way to understand verse 4, “through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.”

Here in verse 4, we see the conclusion of those in Tyre: Since the Spirit revealed to them that “imprisonment and afflictions” awaited him, it’s best that Paul not go to Jerusalem! That counsel is coming from the assumption that suffering is wrong. It must be avoided.

Yet, Paul knew that his life would be filled with suffering. When he was converted on the road to Damascus, the first thing that he was told about his newfound faith in Christ came from Ananias, who had a message from the Lord. The Lord told Ananias, “Go [to Paul] for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name” (Acts 9:15-16). From the day that Paul was converted, he knew that his life would be filled with suffering. So, when the Holy Spirit was revealing to him in every city that “imprisonment and afflictions” awaited him, he was not surprised. He knew that this was God’s plan for his life. God had ordained that he would “suffer for the sake” of the gospel of Christ.

So he was willing to go. But those in Tyre were not so convinced. So, they “were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem” (Acts 21:4). But Paul was undeterred.

Acts 21:5-6

When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, 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.

This scene is reminiscent of Paul’s farewell to the Ephesian elders at Miletus. There on the beach, kneeling and praying and saying farewell.

I love here how verse 5 mentions that the wives and children joined in the sendoff. It showed Paul’s ministry to the families. Though he had only known these people for a week, they had an affection for him that would compel entire families to see him off. And off he went to Jerusalem.

Verse 7 brings us to our next point. Verses 1-6 tell us of Paul’s experience in Tyre. They were telling him, “Don’t go to Jerusalem.” And in Caesarea we will see a similar message: “Don’t go to Jerusalem.”

2. Caesarea (verses 7-14): “Don’t Go!”

Acts 21:7-8

When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, 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 stayed with him.

In verse 7, we see them spending a day in Ptolemais with the disciples, until landing in Caesarea, Paul’s final stop before Jerusalem.

In Caesarea, he stayed at the house of Philip. In verse 8, he is identified as “one of the seven.” This takes us back to Acts, chapter 6, when there was a complaint about how the widows of the church were being treated. Apparently, some of them were being neglected in the “daily distribution [of food]” (Acts 6:1). The apostles, knowing that it was not right for them to give up preaching the word to serve these widows, appointed seven men of quality character to oversee the care of the widows. Philip was one of the seven. Which means that he was a respected servant of the church.

We also see in verse 8 that Philip was identified as “the evangelist.” This takes us back to Acts, chapter 8, which describe Philip preaching Christ in Samaria, north of Jerusalem (Acts 8:5). Many in the city “believed Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12). Philip was also the one who shared the gospel with the Ethiopian Eunuch who was in his chariot on the road to Gaza, south of Jerusalem. The Eunuch was in the chariot and reading from Isaiah 53, which prophesied of the suffering of the Messiah. But the Eunuch was confused about the identity of the Messiah. And so Philip “told him the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35). how Jesus “had no form or majesty that we should look at him” as something special” (Isaiah 53:2). how Jesus “was despised and rejected by men” (Isaiah 53:3). how Jesus bore our griefs and our sorrows on the cross (Isaiah 53:4). how Jesus was “pierced for our transgressions” and “was crushed for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5). how all of us like sheep have gone astray, and “the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

This is the good news. That, when we believe in Jesus, our sins are forgiven, Do you believe? Do you know the forgiveness of sins? Because, when you do, you realize that your eternity is secure, and that our lives are but passing shadows. and you will be willing to die for the cause of Christ. The Eunuch believed in Christ, was baptized by Philip, and went on his way south to Ethiopia.

Philip, on the other hand, continued on his way west to Caesarea, preaching the gospel “to all the towns until he came to Caesarea” (Acts 8:40). This is where we find Philip. We can only assume that he has been here for more than a decade ministering the gospel in Caesarea with his wife and family. Verse 9 describes Philip’s household.

Acts 21:9

He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied.

Sadly, we know very little about these women, and what they prophesied. This is all that we know. That they had some special gift of the Holy Spirit to prophesy. I would suspect that they had learned a thing or two from their evangelistic father. and had a similar heart for the lost.

But it is interesting here that we don’t read of Philip’s daughters prophesying of the future of Paul. Rather it was Agabus, about whom we read in verse 10.

Acts 21:10-11

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, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

We have seen Agabus before. He is mentioned in Acts 11, prophesying of a famine that would take place (Acts 11:28). Here, we see him prophesying about Paul's future.

Agabus took Paul's belt, which in those days was more like a long rope, rather than a leather belt that we use today. He bound his own hands and feet. He quoted what the Holy Spirit had said to him, "This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."

Performing an object lesson like this is similar to what the Old Testament Prophets did. Isaiah walked around naked and barefoot as a sign against Egypt and Cush (Acts 20:3). Jeremiah purchased a loincloth and left it outside for many days. When he retrieved it, it was ruined, just like Jerusalem would be ruined. Ezekiel took a brick and wrote "Jerusalem" on it and build a little siege wall and acted out war against the little brick as a sign of what would happen to Jerusalem. In this case, with Agabus. He was predicting how Paul would be bound in Jerusalem.

Now, this is not news to Paul. He has been hearing it in every city! (Acts 20:23). He just heard it in Tyre (Acts 21:4). Now he was hearing it in Caesarea. Paul was ready for the suffering. from the first day of his conversion he was ready for the suffering! (Acts 9:15-16). He was willing to suffer. He was also willing to die. But it was news to those in Caesarea. Verse 12 describes their response.

Acts 21:12

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

There were times when Paul listened to the counsel of others and ran from danger. When Paul was first converted, he preached the gospel in Damascus and the Jews wanted to kill him (Acts 9:23). They set watchmen at the gates day and night to see if he would leave the city (Acts 9:24). "His disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket" (Acts 9:25). When Paul was in Thessalonica, a mob was formed against him (Acts 17:6). his life was in danger. "The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea" (Acts 17:10). When Paul was in Ephesus, there was another mob formed because of Paul's teaching. Paul wanted to go into the crowd to try and calm it down (Acts 19:30). Yet, the disciples constrained him from going (Acts 19:30). Further, the Asiarchs came and urged him not to venture into the crowds (Acts 19:31). and he listened to them.

But not this time. Paul was not going to listen to their counsel. Note that this is even the counsel of Dr. Luke, who wrote the book of Acts and was his traveling companion (ever since Paul was in Troas – Acts 20:5). Luke wrote, "When we heard this." "We" included Dr. Luke.

The pull to avoid danger and suffering is strong. But Paul would have nothing of their pleading.

Acts 21:13

Then 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."

Paul had his heart set on going to Jerusalem. He had resolved in his heart that he was ready to die in Jerusalem. At this point, Paul is much like Jesus. We read, "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). Jesus knew that when he arrived there, that he would die. He told his disciples "that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (Matthew 16:21).

When Peter heard this, he had the same response that those in Caesarea had. They said, "Don't Go." "Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you'" (Matthew 16:22). Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man" (Matthew 16:23).

Think about Paul in Caesarea. The Holy Spirit clearly laid out the plan: Paul would go to Jerusalem and be bound. But his friends said, "By no means, Paul!" Paul responded as Jesus did, "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." (Acts 21:13). With those words, the people submitted to Paul's perspective.

Acts 21:14

And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

I'm reminded of the scene of Jesus in Gethsemane, knowing of the suffering that was before him. He said, "Not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39). It wasn't easy for Jesus. that's why he sweat drops of blood. It wasn't easy for Paul, but he was willing. It wasn't easy for John Chau, the night before he went to the Island to his death, he wrote, "I'm scared. ... Also frustrated and uncertain. ... Lord let your will be done. If you want me to get ... killed with an arrow then so be it. I think I could be more useful alive though, but to You, God, I give all the glory whatever happens. I DON'T WANT TO DIE!" It certainly wasn't easy. But he was willing. Are you willing? Are you willing to die?

How about this: are you willing to suffer for Christ? Maybe for you that means reputation. Maybe for you that means ridicule as you simply open your mouth and tell others of Jesus?

If you are a believer in Christ, do you realize that God has granted for you to suffer for his sake? "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29). God grants us faith to believe. The only way that we believe is by God opening our eyes to see the majesty of Jesus. But just as he gives us faith, he also gives us suffering. Read it again, "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29).

God has given us suffering. It is God's intention, that the world might watch our suffering. The world is not changed by people who are greatly

blessed. When Christians are driving around in Rolls Royce's claiming that this is what you get if you believe in Jesus, this doesn't draw people to Jesus. It may draw them to a promise of health, wealth and prosperity. But Jesus promises suffering. Those in the world are changed when they see Christians suffer well. That is, through the trial, they say like Job did, "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). That's what stirs people. That's what changes people. That's what Christ did. He didn't conquer the world now. He died upon the cross for us. And suffering as he did, he draws people to himself.

He has given us suffering. to some of us, he has given death. Are you willing to die?

Maybe this morning, you are like Paul, weighing it out. Paul said, "To live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Paul wrestled with this. He said, "What should I do?" Living is Jesus, and that's wonderful. But dying is better! That's the only way that you will have the perspective that's willing to die: if you think that it's gain.

Paul continued to explain his battle. "If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account" (Philippians 1:22-24). Paul says, "I'm ready to die. I would like to die. But I know that if I'm here, it's better for you." And because Paul knew this, he concluded, "Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith" (Philippians 1:25). He said, "I'm going to continue living, because it's better for you."

But Paul was willing to die. Near the end of his life he said, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:6-7). He was faithful right up to the end." Tradition has it that he was beheaded in Rome shortly after he wrote those words.

So, maybe he didn't die in Jerusalem. In Acts, we will see him get to Rome, where he did die. How about you? Are you ready to die? Are you willing to die? Are you like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, ... But if not, ... we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18). Are you like Esther? "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16). Are you like Job? "God gives and takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Now, I don't think that many of us are going to be called martyrs for the faith, but if so, are you ready? Are you willing?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 9, 2022 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] The following video gives a nice summary of his life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wO4cObg0y1s>.

[2] You can see his journal here: <https://archive.org/details/5302048-John-Allen-Chau-s-journal-pages/page/n5/mode/2up>. Here is a helpful transcription of his journal: <https://discipleshiptravel.com/downloads/John-Chau-Journal.pdf>.

[3] <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/the-voice-of-the-martyrs-recognizes-john-chau-for-2022-day-of-the-christian-martyr-301562288.html>. See also <https://www.persecution.com/stories/john-chau/>.

[4] <https://www.faithwire.com/2019/02/04/john-allen-chaus-father-says-extreme-christianity-led-to-sons-murder/>.

[5] https://www.reddit.com/r/atheism/comments/cki0nb/john_allen_chau_was_killed_trying_to_convert_an/.

[6] <https://www.faithwire.com/2019/02/04/john-allen-chaus-father-says-extreme-christianity-led-to-sons-murder/>.