

EXPOSITION OF ACTS

Message #36

Acts 16:1-10

There is much I don't know about ministry. There are things we pray about and wrestle with in view of Scripture, trusting that God will lead and guide and bless. But there is one thing I have learned over the years and that is no matter where God leads you, He will always raise up someone to help you do the job He has called you to do. Whatever His will is, God will bring the right people into your world to make it happen.

If you have ever had some relationship fall apart, you know about the loneliness that can begin to leave you very depressed. Paul and Barnabas had been friends for years, and not just friends; they had served God together as co-workers and co-pioneers of communicating the grace Gospel.

But Paul and Barnabas had parted ways. Paul wanted to revisit the places where they had previously preached. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark who had left the team on the island of Cyprus. Paul would not take Mark with him and so Paul and Barnabas split up.

Now Paul was a very focused and very intense man. However, I am certain that as he began his second missionary journey, he must have had moments when he missed Barnabas. He was excited about revisiting the cities and the believers where God had so powerfully worked, but there must have been memories of the fact that Barnabas was no longer part of the very places where he had been so vital.

But God knew all about that and He had a new special friend in store. There was a young man God was about to direct to Paul and his name was Timothy.

AS PAUL BEGINS HIS SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY GOD RAISES UP A NEW MINISTER FRIEND NAMED TIMOTHY, WHO WILL BECOME A VERY SPECIAL CO-WORKER WITH THE APOSTLE PAUL AS PAUL CONTINUES TO DO GOD'S WILL.

Now I want you to see the historical and geographical precision of Luke in **Acts 16:1**; he lists Derbe before Lystra because Paul is now traveling from east to west and not west to east (14:6). So this account is not just some story; this is factual, historical data.

There are six historical facts we want to observe:

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – Paul meets Timothy. **16:1-2**

Now notice the verb “behold” (ἰδοὺ). This is a middle imperative which draws attention to the fact that this is a key event in the life of Paul which took place in Lystra. Meeting Timothy is a major moment in the Grace Age. This young man will become one of the key men of Paul's life. There are four key realities brought out about Timothy here:

Reality #1 - Timothy was from Lystra . 16:1

Lystra, we may recall, is kind of like one of the old Wild West towns. Now the Apostle Paul considered himself to be the key patriarch of the grace Gospel (I Cor. 4:15). Any who came to faith in Jesus Christ actually did come under the grace authority of the Apostle Paul. We must assume from the fact that Paul calls Timothy his son in the faith (I Corinthians 4:17; I Tim. 1:2), that Timothy came to faith in Christ under the preaching ministry of the Apostle Paul when he first visited Lystra.

It is most likely that his mother and grandmother were converted under Paul's preaching ministry and they communicated that to young Timothy who also believed (II Tim.1:5). So Timothy's salvation was clearly linked to the Apostle Paul.

One other thing we want to point out. Later Paul will challenge Timothy to stir up his gift and not to be timid and back away from the work of the Lord (II Tim. 1:6-7). Remember, the reason he and Barnabas split up is because John Mark had backed away and he did not want his son in the faith bailing out on him.

Reality #2 - Timothy was the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer .

We learn from II Timothy 1:5 that his Jewish mother's name was "Eunice" and his grandmother's name was "Lois." These two women had been instrumental in Timothy coming to faith in Jesus Christ because they came to faith first. According to II Timothy 3:15, Timothy had been taught the Scriptures from his childhood and he had specifically been taught how those Scriptures pointed to salvation which comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

Reality #3 - Timothy was the son of a Greek father who was not a believer.

We never do learn the name of Timothy's father but what we do know by the use of this Pauline term is that his father was an unsaved man. In fact, it is brought out that "all knew" this fact. Paul often used this term in reference to non-believing heathens.

Reality #4 - Timothy had a good reputation with brethren of two different churches .

If we try to do the math on this, if Timothy came to faith under Paul's first missionary journey, then he has been a believer for 3-4 years. In 3-4 years you can earn a tremendous reputation for yourself. We don't know much about Timothy's skills or talents or education. What we do know is that Timothy had earned a tremendous name for himself in two churches: Lystra and Iconium. We may assume that he wanted to be in services where he could learn the Word of God as it related to the grace of God. Now the distance between Lystra and Iconium is 20-25 miles. So Timothy, as a young man, was so interested in the Word of God that he would travel to learn it. Timothy was a man who proved himself to be very faithful to the Lord in the context of the local church.

S. Lewis Johnson said give me a man who is well reported of by the brethren in a local church and I will take him over any academically educated man anyday. He said all things being equal the man well reported by the church will be a success in ministry (*Acts* 15:36-16:10, p. 6). A man could have all of the theological training in the world, but if he does not prove himself in the context of the local church as a faithful man of God he isn't worth a hill of beans.

Years ago in our first ministry there was professor who had filled the pulpit prior to the church calling me. About a year into my ministry there we received a letter requesting that we ordain him, because he wanted a job at a prestigious Christian school and they required that you had to be ordained. Well this man had only filled the pulpit a few times and was not part of our church at all. So we contacted him and asked him, well where is your local church? He didn't belong to any local church, so we suggested he find one and have them ordain him. Having a good reputation in a local church may not seem like much here on earth, but there is no higher or holier organization in heaven. Timothy had a good reputation in two local churches.

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – Paul wants to take Timothy with him. 16:3a

It is more than just interesting to note that **verse 2** says Timothy had a good testimony in two churches and in **verse 3** Paul wants to take him with him. Paul obviously paid attention to that testimony. Paul spotted this young man and he wanted to take Timothy with him.

Notice Timothy is not politicking for this job; Paul is after him. Timothy did not fill out a resume; Paul had already done his homework and he knew this is a quality man who will be a quality Grace Age teacher and preacher of God's Word.

Timothy will become a key person of Paul's outreach ministry. He participates in six of Paul's epistles (II Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1; Philemon 1). He receives two direct letters from Paul (I & II Timothy). Paul refers to him as his son (I Cor. 4:17; I Tim. 1:2) and fellow worker (Rom. 16:21; I Cor. 16:10).

HISTORICAL FACT #3 – Paul sees to it that Timothy is circumcised . 16:3b

Now this seems to be somewhat of a strange thing in view of the fact that Paul had just fought a theological battle over this very issue of circumcision, and the Jerusalem council had just ruled on this matter that circumcision had nothing to do with one being right with God.

What makes this even more perplexing is that when Paul wrote Galatians, which many believe was written between Paul's first and second missionary journey, he would not for one second agree that Titus should be circumcised (Gal. 2:3-5). Why the difference? Why would Paul demand that Timothy be circumcised and Titus not be circumcised? **The difference is this: Titus is full Gentile and Timothy is half -Jew and half -Gentile.**

It would almost seem that Paul is a little inconsistent here. But that is not the case at all. This fits perfectly with what he says in I Corinthians 9:19-23. Paul would do things to enhance the possibility of the outreach of his ministry. He decided that since he was trying to reach both Jews and Gentiles, and since Timothy was half-Jew, it might be wise in this area to have Timothy circumcised.

This has nothing to do with Timothy's salvation, but his potential ministry. Everyone in the area knew that Timothy's father was a Greek, but they also knew his mother was a Jew and Paul did not want this to be a stumbling point.

That way when they went out to various areas and someone asked have you been circumcised, he could say yes. Back in this culture it was a big deal. **This would also show that Timothy was willing to submit to Paul's take on things, something that had caused a rift between him and Barnabas.**

Today if someone asks you whether or not you have been circumcised, you may say physically that is none of your business, but I have been circumcised in my heart.

Timothy was not only circumcised, but he was set apart for ministry by the laying on of hands of the leaders; plus, he received a special gift of God to be able to understand and teach the Word of God (I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6), and there were actual prophecies made concerning him that he would have an impacting ministry (I Tim. 1:18).

HISTORICAL FACT #4 – Paul and his associates were revisiting and strengthening the churches. **16:4-6a**

Now that Paul had selected Timothy, they headed out north to Iconium and west to Antioch and into the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. Paul and Silas and Timothy were traveling and revisiting the churches and were giving them apostolic instruction that had been agreed upon by the apostles and the elders in the church of Jerusalem.

They were communicating the grace faith Gospel and they were admonishing these believers to stay away from idolatry and immorality. As they passed through cities and communicated the Word of God, the church was strengthened and numbers were added to the church.

Notice they were strengthened in the grace/faith system (16:5), not the legal works system. It would appear that Paul held meetings “daily,” not just on weekends. People are strengthened by regularly coming to hear God’s Word. People are strengthened by regularly reading God’s Word and studying God’s Word.

HISTORICAL FACT #5 – Paul is prevented by God’s Spirit from speaking God’s Word in certain places. **16:6b-8**

The Pauline team traveled northwest through the Phrygian and Galatian region and God was using them and blessing them. They covered a lot of territory and apparently as Paul was doing this, he made the decision to move southwest to preach the Word in Asia (**16:6b**).

Paul was moving west, but God’s Spirit stopped him from going southwest into Asia and directed him northwest to Mysia. Now the Asia referred to here is not the continent of Asia that we have today. This was an area located west of Antioch and contained many key cities on the Aegean Sea.

When Paul came to Mysia, he decided to go into the northern region of Bithynia and again God’s Spirit would not let him go there either. This is called closed door negative guidance of God. **The guidance of God is given to those who are really wanting to do God’s will and are out on the road doing it.** Sometimes when you truly want to do God’s will, He will close doors so He may direct you to what His will is. You may not get the job. You may not get the promotion. You may not make the team. You may not earn the reward or make the goal.

Don’t ever underestimate the sovereignty of God in your life.

Paul was a man in tune with God and God stopped him from going certain places. In fact, the Holy Spirit directed Paul away from this area and he went to the city of Troas.

Now how did God’s Spirit actually prevent Paul from going to these places? It is possible through direct revelation because he is an apostle. It is possible that there was no inner peace

about the move. It is also possible that circumstances caved in so that they could not move in that direction. Perhaps financial, physical, or transportation problems prevented them from going. However the Spirit did it, He shut the door.

Now why in the world would God's Spirit stop Paul from taking God's grace to these places? When we get to Acts 19:26, we learn that Paul ends up taking the Gospel of God's grace to "almost all of Asia." So why didn't God let Paul do that here?

Well the only answer we get from the context is because God wanted His Gospel going specifically to another place in the world and the timing of what and where God intended to do this was in His hands. The problem with most of us knowing the will of God is in our timing. We often don't give God the time He needs.

If God's Word is being accurately taught in some place, the people had better take advantage of it because this doesn't happen everywhere and it doesn't happen all the time.

We learn here that the apostles were dependent on God for His leading. God sometimes opens doors and at the same time He also shut doors.

HISTORICAL FACT #6 – Paul is directed by God to go to Macedonia . **16:9-10**

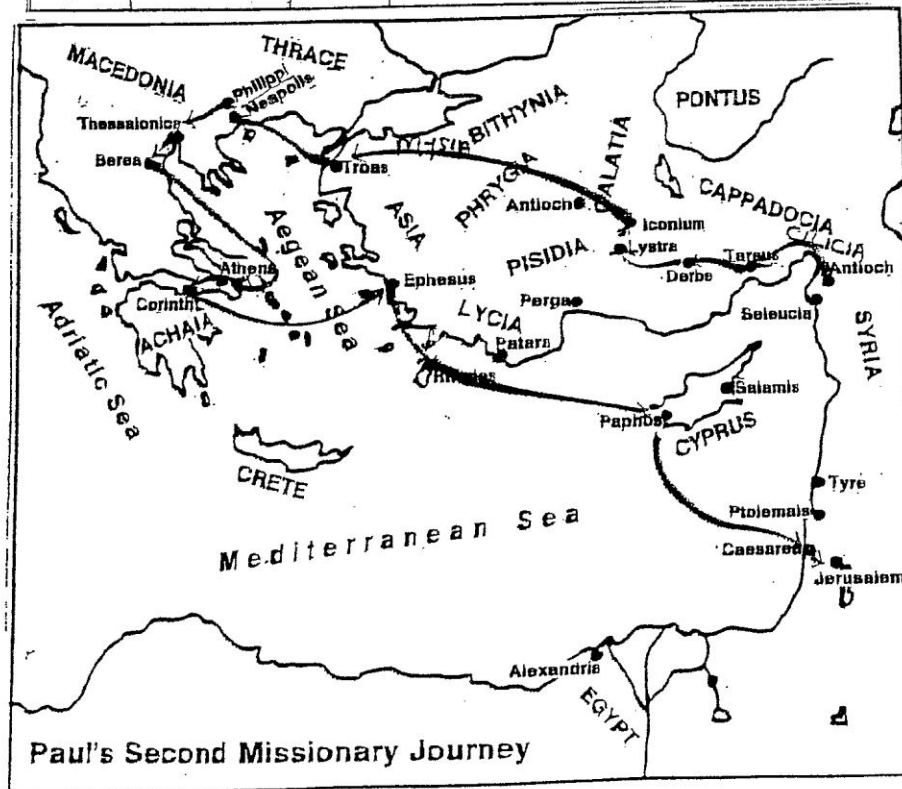
While Paul and his team were in Troas, he received a direct revelatory vision from God to go to Macedonia. Macedonia was 120-130 miles across the Aegean Sea. When Paul received that vision he immediately sought to find a ship so they could go and preach the Gospel of the grace of God.

We might ask why didn't God give Paul a vision earlier? Because God wanted him to depend on Him every step of the way. We need to realize that God is directing every phase of our life- the open doors and the closed doors. We need to believe that and yield to Him.

Now when Paul gets to Macedonia, God will use him in a great way. The Bible records several Macedonian believers- Gaius, Aristarchus, Secundus, Sopater and Epaphroditus. Many suspect Luke himself came from Philippi in Macedonia (Acts 17:11; 19:29; 20:4; Phil. 4:10-19; I Thess. 2:8, 17-20; 3:10). **Now this vision has us in mind. Because this move right here takes the Gospel into Europe and that Gospel would eventually come right across the Atlantic to the United States.**

What was that Gospel message? If you will believe on Jesus Christ you will be saved and justified from all things.

Journey	Scripture	Time	Places Visited	Books Written
First	Acts 13:1— 14:28	A.D. 47-48	Seleucia, Cyprus (Salamis, Paphos) Perga, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe	None
Second	Acts 15:36— 18:22	A.D. 49-52	Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, Troas, Samothracia, Neapolis, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Caesarea, Jerusalem	I Thessalonians II Thessalonians
Third	Acts 18:23— 21:17	A.D. 52-56	Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece, Philippi, Troas, Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Trogyllium, Miletus, Coos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Ptolemais, Caesarea, Jerusalem	I Corinthians II Corinthians Romans



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