

"The Second Missionary Journey"**Part 2****Acts 15:41-18:22**

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we looked at Acts 16:1-5 and in these verses, we followed as Paul, Silas departed from Antioch on a journey to revisit the churches that were started by Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. When they came to Derbe and Lystra they met a young man by the name of Timothy. Timothy had a reputation that showed that he was a Godly young man. Paul decided to take him along on the journey but before they would leave Paul had to have Timothy circumcised. This was not for the purpose of salvation but it was because Timothy was considered a Jew because his mother was a Jew and in this missionary journey they would encounter many Jews and if the Jews discovered that Timothy was a Jew and was not circumcised, they would most likely refuse to hear the Gospel. Therefore, to keep from offending the Jews and blocking the road for the Gospel to get in their hearts, Paul made sure that Timothy was circumcised. Paul wanted nothing to hinder the Gospel message. Paul was the missionary to the Gentiles but he also had a broken heart for the Jews.

Romans 9:1-4

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

² That **I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.**

³ For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

⁴ Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Notice Acts 16:1-5

As they traveled, they gave to the Gentiles the decree from the Jerusalem council concerning what they were to abstain from. In their ministry the believers were strengthened and there were more people saved.

➤ **The Spirit's Direction**

Notice Acts 16:6

As the team traveled, they desired to preach the Gospel in Asia but the Holy Spirit closed the door and would not permit them to do so. We are not told how this was communicated by the Spirit; it could possibly have been through Silas who was a prophet but we cannot be sure.

Notice Acts 16:7

When they came to Mysia they desired to go north to Bithynia but again the Holy Spirit did not allow them to do so.

Notice Acts 16:8

They continued their journey until they came to Troas. Now we do not know how long they had to wait while they were at Troas. We read the text and it will seem as though they had just arrived and then they received the Macedonian call. But we really do not know.

Application:

There are many great lessons in all of this for our lives and for the church as a body.

1. It is so very important that we follow the Spirit and not what we desire.

This is one of the most important lessons that we can learn. In our day today we have committees and we get everything organized and then away we go. But many times, the Spirit is never included. The entire program might be a great idea but maybe it is not the Lord's will. When this happens then the entire program or whatever it might be is all done in the flesh and there is no spiritual power in it.

1 Corinthians 2:10-11

¹⁰ But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

¹¹ For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Notice the words of A. C. Gaebelein

"Such humble reliance upon the direction of the Holy Spirit is but little known in our days. The great movements of our times seem to place more stress on organization, widespread advertising methods and financial support, than on the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit."

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 12-13

E no movement about from all his enemies;

² *That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.*

³ *And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee.*

⁴ *And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying,*

⁵ *Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?*

¹² *And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.*

¹³ *He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.*

2. Sometimes there are long corridors of time when there seems to be no movement from the Lord.

Let me show you the map again.

From Phrygia to Troas was a long corridor where nothing exciting seemed to happen. This is the way life goes at times. There are times in life when it seems as though God is doing very little and He has shut certain doors and all we can do is keep moving in a straight line or just stay right where we are at. These can be difficult times to endure especially when you are looking for God to do something that you have been praying about. In this situation which Paul and Silas faced there are many who would have forced their way into the cities that they desired to visit. But it would have been for nothing and it would have been completely in the power of the flesh. I was told many years ago that when you don't know what to do don't do anything. I would add to that and say, "Do what you can where you are at and do not force your way through a closed door."

Psalm 46:10

¹⁰ *Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*

It can be very difficult to "BE STILL" when we really want to see something happen. But we must know that God has a better plan. Notice this story about a young woman who had prepared for missionary service on foreign fields.

She had been appointed by the mission board and was ready to sail when she received a telegram saying that her sister had died in a western state.

She cancelled her reservation and went home.

The sister left four little children and since there was no one to care for them this young woman had to stay with them.

Her heart was broken. She had dreamed of being a missionary and now she would never have a chance to go out for the Lord.

However, she submitted to the Lord's will and did the best she could for the children.

As they grew up, one by one they came to her saying, 'Aunt, I feel that God wants me to be a missionary.'

So instead of one person going out as a missionary, because of her faithfulness to God and His call four went out.

She came to see, after all, that God's way was the best way."

Going back to Acts it is very interesting to notice the way in which the Spirit led these early men who carried the Gospel. He led them by "closed doors" not "open doors" which is not always what we look for. Notice the words of F. B. Myer.

"It is interesting to study the method of his guidance as it was extended towards these early heralds of the Cross. It consisted largely in prohibitions, when they attempted to take another course than the right. When they would turn to the left, to Asia, He stayed them; and when they sought to turn to the right, to Bithynia, again He stayed them. He shut all the doors along their route, and bolted them; so that they had no alternative but to go straight forward. In the absence of any prohibition, they were left to gather that they were treading the prepared path for which they had been created in Christ Jesus.

Whenever you are doubtful as to your course, submit your judgment absolutely to the Spirit of God, and ask Him to shut against you every door but the right one. Say, "Blessed Spirit, I cast on Thee the entire responsibility of closing against my steps any and every course which is not of God. Let me hear thy voice behind me whenever I turn to the right hand or the left. Put thine arrest on me. Do not suffer me."

In the meanwhile, continue along the path which you have been already treading. It lies in front of you; pursue it. Abide in the calling in which you were called. Keep on as you are, unless you are clearly told to do something else. Expect to have as clear a door out as you had in; and if there is no indication to the contrary, consider the absence of indication to be the indication of God's will that you are on his track."

3. Need does not always determine the will of God.

The journey across Asia was close to 400 miles. In this journey there were many cities that they could have stopped at and possibly one that Paul longed to get to was Ephesus. This city would have had hundreds of thousands of people. But God shut the doors and said, "NO." Were these people not important? Did these people not need to hear the Gospel? The answer to both of these questions is "YES!" But the time was not right or should I say, the timing was not God's timing.

When I stop and consider this, I realize that NEED does not always determine the will of God. Sometimes the needs are set to the side until the appointed time by God to fulfill them. This is so important for us to grasp. There are needs that come up and we are quick to believe that it is God's will to immediately meet that need. But from this we can see that there are times when God allows the need to exist until His appointed time. This goes back to following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Some of the situations we face can play on our emotions and we then start making decisions based upon how we feel or on how a situation looks. But the Truth is we **MUST** be led by the Spirit.

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 17

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

¹⁷ *I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.*

4. We can expect to be stopped at times when following the will of God.

When Paul and Silas came to Troas they stopped on the edge of the sea. I cannot help but wonder what went through their minds before the Macedonian call. The point I want to make here is that we do not know how long they were at Troas before the call came. I point this out because there are times in our lives when God just stops us and nothing seems to happen for a long period of time.

Psalms 37:23

²³ *The steps [and the stops] of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

Proverbs 16:9

⁹ *A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps [and his stops].*

There will be times in your walk that you just do not seem to be moving but that does not mean God is not working.

Philippians 1:6

⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

5. When God opens the door, it may not be what we expected.

Notice Acts 16:9-13

When they came to Macedonia, they found no man like in the vision. They only found a small group of women that had come to the river for prayer. It will be through this small group that the Gospel makes it into Europe.

Conclusion:

I will leave you with two verses then we will revisit this next week.

Zechariah 4:9-10

⁹ The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.

¹⁰ For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.