

~ACTS~

Lesson 48- God's Timing in His Perfect Will

Acts 16:6-10

Today we are continuing our study of Paul's 2nd missionary journey. Last week we saw Paul and Silas embark on this journey, heading back through the churches of Galatia to strengthen these new Christians in the faith and to warn them to stay away from the false gospel of the Judaizers. Because even after the Jerusalem Council meeting, these Judaizers were still pressuring Jews and Gentiles to follow the Law of Moses. And this pressure was so severe that even Peter and Barnabas were swept away in their hypocrisy in Antioch, Gal 2:11-16. So this is what is prompting Paul's second missionary journey, Acts 15:36. Paul and Silas have now journeyed up through the Galatian area, and along the way, Timothy joins with the company, Acts 16:1-3. And last week we spent some time learning about the faithfulness of brother Timothy.

So this is where we will pick up our study today as we see Paul, Silas, and Timothy travel through the Galatian area into Troas. And it is in Troas that Paul finds another faithful man named Luke who will join their company as well. And through this journey, God's timing and His perfect will become evident.

6) Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

This was now about 5 years after Paul had first come to this region (46-51AD) and now Paul and company are traveling through this area again admonishing the churches of Galatia to beware of the Judaizers. Luke doesn't mention the church's condition in his account in Acts, but we find that over the last 5 years, these Judaizers had deeply infiltrated into the churches of Galatia and were poisoning their minds to the Truth. So much that when Paul gets to Corinth later on this 2nd journey, he will write a fairly harsh letter back to them, pleading with them to turn away from the bondage of the Law. When we get to that point in Acts 18:1, we will spend a whole lesson going through the book of Galatians, but I want to point out the severity of which he was pleading with them, Galatians 3:1-3. This letter was a harsh rebuke to not fall back under the bondage of the Law and to not get swept away with this false gospel of the Judaizers.

After traveling through this region and exhorting the churches to beware of the Judaizers, and distributing the letter written from the Jerusalem Council showing that the church was united in one Gospel, the purpose of their journey was complete. They had gone into this region again "to see how they were doing," Acts 15:36. But with this being accomplished, they didn't return to Antioch. Paul's drive was still to preach the Gospel, so he continued west on his journey. His natural inclination was to travel to the large cities of Asia; probably Ephesus, Smyrna, Thyatira and so on, but verse 6 says... **they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.**

This is an interesting concept to ponder because obviously there were people who needed and wanted to hear the Gospel in Asia. And Ephesus will become the main hub of the Gospel in later years to come as Paul establishes Timothy as Bishop of Ephesus. And the Apostle John eventually moves to Ephesus. And from Patmos he writes the Revelation and records Jesus' seven letters to the seven churches of Asia. The Gospel would surely go forth into Asia, but that time was not now. Later at the end of this 2nd missionary journey, the Spirit would finally allow Paul to preach at Ephesus, but just for a short time, Acts 18:18-21. Then on his 3rd journey he would come back to Ephesus and stay for three years as he established this great church. But even after the door to Asia was opened, it was not easy for Paul and these churches. The enemy was constantly attacking Paul and this newly founded church, 1 Cor 16:9; 15:32; 2 Cor 1:8-9; Acts 20:29-31. The ministry in Asia was extremely hard, even once the door was opened to preach the Gospel there, but for now the door was closed. And for reasons unknown to us, the Holy Spirit forbade Paul and his company to, "λαλῆσαι τὸν λόγον ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ" speak the Word, the Logos, in Asia. So the Spirit moved them north on a different route traveling through Mysia... verse 7

7) After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

So twice the Holy Spirit forbids them to preach the Gospel in two different regions, Asia and Bithynia. Regions in which the Gospel would flourish in the future, but for now the Spirit is not permitting them to go.

Bithynia would become a major region for Christianity because this was the region in which the Byzantine Empire would prosper the Gospel for 1,200 years (330-1500AD). This was the area of Constantinople and the Council of Nicene. When Constantine, being led of the Spirit, chose to move the Roman capital from Rome, Italy to this well fortified region. Constantine ordered faithful monks to transcribe the preserved Textus Receptus of Lucian of Antioch and store them safely in Constantinople. And because of its remote location, the Textus Receptus and the Majority Text would be preserved from the enemy while the Roman Catholic Church tried to destroy the Bible and the Truth of the Gospel.

There is no record of Paul ever traveling into the area of Bithynia, but we know there were churches there even before Constantine because Peter writes to them in his first letter, **1 Peter 1:1**. It is interesting to note that Silas (Sylvanus) was Peter's scribe for this letter, and Silas was forbidden to enter Bithynia with Paul. Is it possible that maybe later in his life Peter and Silas went to Bithynia and established churches in that region?

Obviously, God knew the Gospel would flourish in these areas, but it had to be by His timing. There was nothing wrong with Paul wanting to go to these areas, except it just wasn't the plan of God for Paul at that time or ever as in the case with Bithynia. And that is so crucial to understand in ministry and in our everyday lives. As we make decisions in life, we must always be willing to say, not my will, but Yours be done. We must hold our plans loosely, being willing to let Him change our course and direct our steps. This is walking by the Spirit. It is walking by faith and not by sight. This is true koinonia Fellowship with Him. It's a relationship with our God. He's not the puppet master, not giving us any choice. No, in fact God wants us to freely choose Him, and then He will lead us and guide our steps. **Proverbs 16:1LXX** makes this very clear. We set our heart toward Him, and He will make our paths straight.

Our heart is the key. He is the knower of all hearts. We set our heart toward Him and allow Him to direct our steps and our life will be full of unending joy because we are walking in His perfect will for our lives. This is how Paul lived His life... being led of the Spirit and His perfect will guiding him, Galatians 2:20; Romans 8:14. So Paul thought he would go to Asia and Bithynia, but the Spirit redirected him. But notice Paul didn't stop moving. My dad has a great saying... "You can't steer a boat that's not moving." We can't stand idle, but we also have to have a willing heart, expectant ears, always ready to do the Father's will. And when we hear Him direct our steps, its easy for us to maneuver and change because we are already moving and working for Him.

God has a specific place he wants Paul to go, and that is Macedonia. But before going to Macedonia, God leads Paul and his company to the city of Troas for a specific purpose.

8) So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

Troas was a major port on the coast of the Aegean Sea and a prominent city in the Apostle Paul's life and in world history in general. Troas is the city of the famous city of Troy where the Trojan War in Homers Iliad and the Odyssey took place. Troas is also where Paul was arrested the final time leading to his martyrdom. And this is also where he left his cloak and his books and parchments with Carpus, 2 Tim 4:13. One conjecture I have is that Paul was having Carpus copy his letters to be sent throughout the world to all the churches and believers. And it was here in this place when Paul was visiting Carpus to check on the progress of his work that Paul was arrested and brought to Rome resulting in his second

imprisonment to finally be martyred. And it is here now in Troas that Paul finds brother Luke and receives a vision to go into Macedonia to preach the Gospel.

9) And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Who was this Macedonian man? There are several conjectures. Some think this was Luke calling Paul into Macedonia. But I disagree with that because in the next verse we find that Luke is in Troas. Others think this was the Philippian jailer that is converted. This is possible, but I personally don't think it was any one person, but God calling Paul to the people of Macedonia. I think this was the cry of hungry hearts just like Cornelius. And God heard their prayers and called Paul in a vision.

10) Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Verse 10 makes it very clear that this is the Lord calling Paul and his company over to Macedonia, ... **concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.** Up until this point, two doors had been shut by the Holy Spirit, and now the Lord is calling Paul into His perfect will: directing the Apostle's steps and guiding his path. Not to safety, but to preach the Gospel in Macedonia. And we will find that preaching the Gospel in Macedonia becomes extremely treacherous, but it is filled with unending joy and fruit. God's calling has a joy and a reward that nothing else can compare to. A calling that is filled with much fruit and labor of love and eternal glory, **1 Thess 2:19-20; Romans 8:18.**

Verse 10 is a key verse in following the life of Paul and Luke. Notice the use and change of the pronouns between verses 8 and 10. **8) So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 10) Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia...** Notice the writer of Acts is now including himself in the narrative. Who wrote the book of Acts? None other than Brother Luke. So this is the exact point when Luke begins traveling with the Apostle Paul, and from this point on, you can track when Luke was traveling with Paul and when he was somewhere else based on the pronoun usage in his text. And we will find that Luke travels with Paul to Philippi, but then when Paul goes on to Thessalonica, Luke remains in Philippi until Paul comes back on his 3rd journey six years later to pick him up, Acts 20:5. And from that point on, for the remaining 8 years of his life (58-66AD), Luke never leaves his side. In fact, at the end of Paul's life, Paul is in a dungeon awaiting his death, all his friends had left him except for one faithful man... brother Luke. Paul writes in 2 Tim 4:11 "*Luke alone is with me.*"

So here on Paul's second journey, Paul finds Luke in Troas. We don't know why Luke was in this city. Some say this was prearranged by Paul to meet him there, but this cannot be since this was not Paul's desire to go to Troas. If it were up to him, he would have gone to Asia or Bithynia, but instead the Spirit directed him to Troas for the sole purpose so that Luke and Paul could meet again and become fellow workers for the Gospel. But I don't believe this was the first time Paul met Luke. Paul was extremely picky about who would join him on his journeys, so the fact that Luke immediately begins traveling with Paul tells us two things: 1) that he was already a Christian, and 2) he was also a friend of the Apostle Paul, possibly from Antioch, and he was one who had already proven himself as a faithful companion and worker of the Gospel to Paul.

On this second missionary journey, Paul is joined with his two most faithful companions... Timothy and Luke. Last lesson we were introduced to Timothy, so I thought it would be fun to learn a little about Luke as well.

Luke: The Beloved Physician

Tradition tells us Luke was born and raised in Antioch of Syria; a Gentile raised in the Antiochian schools of arts and science. Antioch, being the third largest city only to Rome and Alexandria, flourished with

schools of learning. And it is probably in Antioch that Luke learned to be a doctor. Paul calls Luke his “beloved physician,” in his letter to the Colossians, Col 4:14. Tradition also tells us that Luke may have studied in Greece and Egypt learning from the best schools in the world, probably from Alexandria.

Luke: The Great Historian

Luke was also a great historian. Sir William Ramsay who lived in the late 1800's as one of the greatest archaeologists of all time, set out to disprove Luke's writings in the Bible. After years of research and traveling through the footsteps of Acts, Ramsay discovered that everything Luke said was absolutely true and he changed his position toward Luke by saying, “Luke is an historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense ... in short, this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians.” Luke's precision to every detail proved the Bible to be true and it proved Jesus to be the Christ, and Ramsay became a Christian. *

Luke: Master of the Greek Language

Luke not only was a skillful historian and physician, but he was also a master of the Greek language. His writing style and word usage is clearly distinct from any other writer of the NT being of a higher and more formal level of Greek than any other writer in the Bible. William Cave, a 17th century historian, says “His way and manner of writing is exact and accurate, his style polite and elegant, sublime and lofty, yet clear and easily understood, flowing with an ease and natural grace and sweetness, admirably accommodate to an historical design, all along expressing himself in a vein of purer Greek than is to be found in the other Writers of the Holy Story... In short, as an Historian, he was faithful in his relations, elegant in his writings; as a Minister, careful and diligent for the good of Souls; as a Christian, devout and pious: and who crowned all the rest with the laying down his life for the testimony of that Gospel, which he had both preached and published to the world.” †

Luke was an amazing man whom God chose to write a large portion of the New Testament. His writings consisting of his Gospel and Acts combine to make up 27.56% of the entire NT, which is more than any other writer of the NT. Paul with Hebrews is second with 26.92%; and John is third at 20.30%. Luke's writing style and grammar is distinct and different than any other writer in the NT. When compared to Paul or John's writings, it is as William Cave said, he uses a “a vein of purer Greek,” and yet we see hints of his writing style within Paul's epistles. Such as the book of Hebrews, and the pastoral epistles: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Because of this, it is my conjecture that Luke co-authored these epistles. They were the thoughts of Paul, but clearly have the writing style and grammar of Luke. These two men shared life together, traveled together, and wrote the New Testament together, and their combined writings make up almost 55% of the NT.

Now in Troas, Luke has officially joined the company and it seems this is the only reason the Holy Spirit directed Paul to Troas was to join with Luke. Because there is no mention of them preaching the Gospel in this city. So from Troas they travel to Macedonia according to the vision that Paul had received. Now being a company of four: Paul, Silas, Timothy and now Luke, they set sail for Macedonia. There is much to talk about with their journey to Macedonia and the events in the city of Philippi, so we will pick up here next week as we see Paul's second missionary journey unfold in the book of Acts.

* bibleapologetics.org/luke-a-historian-of-the-first-rank/;
christianpublishinghouse.co/2022/09/04/sir-william-ramsay-defends-the-new-testament/

† [History of the Lives of Mark and Luke](#), 1676 pg Y₂