

Refuge City Church — July 31, 2022

“Sovereignty & Sacrifice” [Acts 16:1-15]

Introduction

- **Last time:** Pastor Ray walked us through Chapter 15.
 - Known as the Jerusalem Council, they agreed in unity that the Gentiles are not required to abide by certain legalistic requirements to be accepted into faith and the church.
 - Paul separated from Barnabas over a disagreement regarding Mark, and takes on Silas as a mission partner.
- **Today:** We see the beginning of the 2nd missionary journey to expand the Kingdom of God in Asia Minor, and see it introduced onto a new continent.
- **THINK ON TWO THINGS:**
 1. Why would the Holy Spirit say “No” and close the door to the advancement of the gospel?
 2. How do we respond to “closed doors” and circumstance-altering dilemmas in our life?

Verses 1-5

“Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.”

- As we saw on the map, they begin this next journey by revisiting the cities in reverse order.
 - **REMINDER:** the cities where Paul and Barnabas were persecuted, and Paul was stoned to the point of death.
 - The encouragement and strengthening of this new church was of vital importance.
- They also pick up a new traveling companion named Timothy.
 - It is believed that this is where Timothy received Christ as Lord, as he was being raised by his Grandmother Lois, and Mother Eunice.
 - **2 Timothy 3:14-15**, “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”
 - **Verse 1** gives us the indication that Timothy’s father was an unbeliever; “...but his father was a Greek.”

- **Verse 2** tells us that Timothy was well known throughout the region [man of character and faith]
- So why circumcise him?? Especially after they had just debated and discussed circumcision as the central topic of salvation for the Gentiles.
 - Paul understood that the practice of circumcision as a matter of the heart, and agreed with everything discussed in Jerusalem.
 - **Romans 2:28-29**, “For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter...”
 - What makes us citizens of this country? [birthright, naturalization, morality...]
 - A piece of paper that declares we were born within these borders.
 - **Philippians 3:20**, “But our citizenship is in heaven...”
 - Salvation is by grace, not legalistic/religious practices. So Paul had Timothy go through it not for his sake, but for those they might reach with the gospel.
 - **Romans 14:13**, “...never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.”
 - **1 Corinthians 9:19-23**, “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”
 - Are we going to argue someone to salvation because they don’t immediately fall in line with our way of thinking, “religious practices”, or *our* interpretation of scripture?
 - On the flip side, it doesn’t mean we fall into sin just to accommodate someone to manipulate them to salvation.
 - Cultural ignorance vs. Cultural sensitivity
 - Ultimately we need to show grace and love.
 - **QUOTE:** “Paul did things for the sake of love that he would not do for the sake of trying to please God through legalism.” [David Guzik]

Verses 6-10

“And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

- When the Holy Spirit says “No”.
- **Remember:** Who initially commissioned Paul and Barnabas to go on these journeys? **[The Holy Spirit]**

- **Acts 13:2**, “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”
- Therefore it would be the Spirit of God that guided them throughout their mission. [**Matthew 28:20**, “...And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”]
- When God says “No”, it is because He is directing our path. He decides where we go.
 - **Isaiah 55:9**, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
 - **Proverbs 21:1**, “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.”
- A closed door means God has *His* plans in mind. He is not dictated by our feelings. He is going to direct according to His sovereign plan. [meistic vs. theistic]
 - May this give us perspective when things don’t seem to go our way.
 - **Proverbs 3:5-6**, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”
 - **QUOTE:** “It seems to me that we should not concern ourselves mainly with the *methods* that God uses to guide people... We should, however, concentrate on where we can be of most use as the Lord’s servants... If our choices for places of ministry are equally acceptable to God, He probably will not steer us away from any of them... We can go wherever we please. However, if He does not want us in one or more of these places, I believe that He will shut one or more doors for us, as He did for Paul. God often guides us by bringing information to our attention that enlightens our judgment when we need to make decisions.” [Dr. Thomas Constable]
- God reveals His plan for their mission through a vision, and leads them on.

Verses 11-15

“So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.”

- Here’s the blessing of God’s sovereignty and plan... the initial establishment of the gospel and the very beginnings of the church in Europe.
- No mention of a synagogue in Philippi; according to tradition, you needed 10 Jewish men to start a synagogue.
 - With a lack of God-fearing men, Paul and his team minister to those willing to hear God’s Word.
- I want us to see the beauty of Lydia’s conversion.
 - She’s already seeking God [similar to Cornelius in Chapter 10]
 - The Lord opened her heart to pay attention.
 - God holds absolute sovereignty in humanity’s actions and salvation.

- **John 6:44**, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”
- **1 Corinthians 3:6-7**, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.”
- She believed and was baptized! She proved that her internal faith was genuine through outward proclamation.
- She was faithful and hospitable; a mark of every believer.
 - **Romans 12:13**, “Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.”

Conclusion

- I want to close today by focusing on what we may have overlooked in this segment of scripture. **Sacrifice.**
 - Once again Paul and his team would sacrifice the comfort of ‘home’ to travel hundreds of miles to new territory, not knowing what they would encounter.
 - They were willing to potentially sacrifice their life for the encouragement of the church, by returning to where they were once persecuted and almost killed.
 - They sacrificed time, by giving themselves to an unknown timetable for the sake of the gospel; sacrificial lifestyle.
 - Timothy sacrificed pride, and a piece of his flesh, in order to insure there would be no roadblocks to presenting the gospel.
 - Paul sacrificed cultural expectations and sat down opposite women and presented the gospel.
 - Lydia could have sacrificed her wealth in her new found salvation.
- All of this perfectly mimics what Jesus did for us and how He lived His life in ministry. [**Mark 10:45; service and sacrifice**]
- In all that God calls us to do, even in the simple routine of our day-to-day, we are to live out a sacrificial lifestyle for the sake of the Kingdom of God.
 - **Romans 12:1**, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship [**rational service**].”
 - **Hebrews 13:15-16**, “Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”
- All of our life is **sacrifice of self**, to elevate the glory of God, to count others worthy of the hope of salvation, doing all we need to do without sin, in order to reach more with the gospel of Jesus. Amen!
- **NEXT WEEK:** We’ll see the continuation of the gospel in Philippi and beyond.