

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Two Expressions of God's Sovereignty **Acts 16:11-15**

Keywords: Missions, 2nd Missionary Journey, Sovereignty, Evangelism, History

PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: Paul, having had a vision to come to Macedonia, travels over sea and land to arrive in this key city. There we find him encounter a group of women and we see the saving hand of God in the life of one named Lydia. But in all of this we also can see how God sovereignly moves in and through human history and human hearts to bring about His purposes throughout the ages.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read 16:1-15.
- B. As I studied this passage I found myself down a path that had almost no end.
 - 1. The path I went down this week was one of history and why Paul would choose certain places to visit and why. How cities were started and named. How people would move about from one place to another.
 - 2. Part of how I approach the bible is called the Literal, Grammatical, Historical process. And this is exactly what I was doing, learning the historical setting in which this event occurred.
 - 3. It was the stories of men pursuing their aspirations and dreams. Of battles, intrigue and corruption. It was the story of mankind.
 - 4. But it was also (and much more importantly) the story of God's hand in human events and history. Both on a massive, world-wide scale and on a very personal scale.
 - 5. This little passage shows us two expressions of God's sovereignty. Two ways that God shows/reveals/expresses His sovereignty over His creation.
 - a. The sovereignty of God over history.
 - b. The sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners.

II. Two Expressions of God's Sovereignty.

- A. The sovereignty of God over history (11-12).
 - 1. We need to read behind and between the lines in these verses to appreciate what is happening.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. Remember what led up to vss 11-12.
3. Macedonia.
4. After two attempts to go further into Asia Paul's team, with Luke now with him, set out to sea at Troas.
5. When they land in Macedonia it is at the port of Philippi, a place called Neapolis.
 - a. On modern maps this place is called Cavalla/Kavala and is 12 miles SE of Philippi proper.
 - b. What is key to know is that there is a famous Roman road at Neapolis, *Via Egnatia*. It all the way across Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece.
 - c. Paul used this road to get to Philippi, then, in chapter 17 we see him going through Amphipolis, Apollonia and then Thessalonica. All of these were on that road.
 - d. Philippi was named after Philip II of Macedon.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- (1) He was the father of Alexander the Great.
 - (2) In 42 BC a major battle happened here that helped transform Philippi from a small town to a city of significance.
 - (3) And it is in the Roman Empire that these roads were built which now were used by Paul's team to bring the gospel into Europe.
6. Here is my point in all of this: None of this just happened.
 - a. *"The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of YHWH; He turns it wherever He wishes"* (Proverbs 21:1).
 - b. Here we see the rise and fall of entire empires. Men and women involved in the most intense of intrigue, plotting and planning, living and dying.
 - c. And in the midst of these grand plans, often filled with much evil, we find God working it all out for His divine purposes.
 - d. And as Galatians 4:4 says, *"When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son. . . ."*
 7. If human history is just a series of events with no meaning, no direction and no purpose, then we have no hope. But if it is merely the unfolding of God's sovereign purpose, then we only need to look to God for meaning.

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- B. The sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners (13-15).
1. Paul goes outside the gate on the Sabbath. Why?
 - a. As it says, he supposed that there would be a place of prayer down by the river.
 - b. Again, this requires us to know the history to appreciate what is happening.
 - c. Paul's method of evangelizing was to always go first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. We have seen him do this already in the book of Acts.
 - d. So, the wording of vs 13 indicates that Paul found no synagogue so he knew where to look, outside the city walls.
 2. It is interesting to note that the very first people Paul speaks to about the gospel is not men, certainly not the one in the vision, but women.
 3. God opens the heart of Lydia (14).
 - a. This woman is the first convert to Jesus Christ in the city of Philippi.
 - (1) She appears to be either divorced or a widow as there is no mention of a husband and the business is attached to her and not some man.
 - (2) We know she was relatively successful because she opened her home up to Paul and his companions.
 - b. The question we should ask is what is meant by God "opened" her heart?
 - (1) Notice in vs 14 that God did this for a purpose, that she would listen, respond, or pay attention to what Paul said.
 - (2) Not that she would listen to Paul; rather, that she would listen and embrace the **message** that Paul was saying. It is all about the message and not Paul.
 4. Here again we have Paul bringing to these women the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

5. And immediately we begin to see the results of salvation in her life.

III. Conclusion.

- A. And there we have it, two ways the sovereignty of God is expressed.
- B. You may reject this. Many do. They shake their fists at God and reject Him. They live their life full of bitterness toward God. They pretend that he does not exist.

1. But this changes nothing. The whole universe is His and it is unfolding in perfect submission to His purposes and plan.

- a. There is much mystery in this part of His sovereignty as we watch so much evil and rebellion occur within the world.

- b. And yet the bible says it so simply in Psalm 2

Why do the nations rage

And the peoples meditate on a vain thing?

2 The kings of the earth take their stand

And the rulers take counsel together

Against Yahweh and against His Anointed, saying,

3 “Let us tear their fetters apart

And cast away their cords from us!”

4 He who sits in the heavens laughs,

The Lord mocks them.

5 Then He speaks to them in His anger

And terrifies them in His fury, saying,

6 “But as for Me, I have installed My King

Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”

7 “I will surely tell of the decree of Yahweh:

He said to Me, ‘You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You.

8 ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And the ends of the earth as Your possession.

9 ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron,
You shall shatter them like a potter’s vessel.’”

10 So now, O kings, show insight;
Take warning, O judges of the earth.

11 Serve Yahweh with fear
And rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way,
For His wrath may soon be kindled.

How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

2. Shake your fist at God, it changes nothing. But if you will hear His call to come and find your refuge in Him through His Son Jesus Christ, He will not reject you.
 - a. So today, repent from any bitterness in your soul toward God for how life is treating you. Cast yourself into His care and you will do well.
 - b. And for you who do not yet trust in Jesus Christ, make it your daily prayer that God might open your heart to see the salvation found in Jesus and find your rest in what He has done.

Benediction

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you always. May you rest in the power of the Holy Spirit and may you rejoice in the love of the Father as it flows to you in every moment and in every way. Amen.