

The Life of Paul - Week 9 08-29-26
When the Detour Becomes the Direction

1. The Journey Didn't Go As Planned: Paul and his companions traveled from Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia. While they were there, **John Mark left the team and returned to Jerusalem.**

Acts 13:13 "From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem." This departure would later become a significant disagreement between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15).

Galatians 4:13 "As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you." Paul's journey also appears to have been affected by illness. Many believe Paul may have contracted malaria in the low-lying, swampy region around Perga. Whether or not we can know the exact illness, the important point is that **Paul's plans were interrupted.**

Consider: Have you ever had your plans interrupted by circumstances you could not control? How do you normally respond when life does not go according to plan? Can you trust God even when you cannot understand the detour?

2. Sometimes The Detour Is Part Of God's Plan: Paul did not simply stop because things became difficult. He continued toward Pisidian Antioch, even though getting there required an extremely difficult journey through the Taurus Mountains. The journey was approximately **100 miles**, involving a climb of more than **5,000 feet** through difficult and dangerous terrain. What may have looked like a setback became an opportunity. Paul eventually preached his first recorded sermon in Pisidian Antioch, bringing the Gospel into an important center of southern Galatia.

Key Truth: A change in your plans does not mean a change in God's purpose. Sometimes what feels like an interruption is actually an invitation to trust God in a new direction.

3. Paul Had To Climb The Mountain: Paul could not simply skip the difficult part of the journey. He had to climb. "He had to climb it anyway. Five thousand feet up, through freezing storms and jagged, unforgiving terrain, on legs that were already weak." The mountain was difficult, but on the other side was the place God was preparing for him. **Sometimes faith means continuing when the road is hard.** We may want God to remove the mountain, but sometimes God uses the mountain to take us somewhere we could not reach without climbing it. **The difficult part of the journey does not necessarily mean you are on the wrong path.**

4. When Life Feels Like "PERGA": We need to consider whether we are currently living in a "Perga season." Maybe you are: Dealing with a health challenge. Walking through a broken relationship. Facing a job situation that did not work out. Watching a plan fall apart. Experiencing an unexpected delay. Wondering why God has allowed your journey to take this direction. It is easy to look at these seasons and think they are wasted time. But God may be doing something you cannot see yet. "God took what looked like a detour, an inconvenience, even a failure of the plan, and turned it into the place where Paul preached his first recorded sermon."

Remember: Your Perga may be preparing you for your Pisidian Antioch.

What feels like a setback today may become part of the testimony God uses tomorrow.

5. Paul Went To The Synagogue: When Paul arrived in Pisidian Antioch, he and Barnabas entered the synagogue on the Sabbath.

Acts 13:14 "On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down." The synagogue provided an opportunity for both Jews and Gentiles who were interested in God to hear the Scriptures. Paul was able to speak to people who already had some understanding of the God of Israel and the Scriptures. The leaders eventually invited Paul to speak.

Acts 13:15 "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak." Paul was ready when the opportunity came.

Application: God may place you in a particular environment because He intends to use you there. **Be ready when the opportunity comes.**

6. "You Gentiles Who Worship God, Listen": Paul addressed both Israelites and Gentiles who worshiped God. These Gentiles were interested in God. They attended the synagogue, prayed, and studied the Scriptures, but they had not fully committed themselves to becoming Jews. They were close—but fear and culture had kept them from taking the final step. This creates an important question for us: **What is keeping you from fully surrendering to God?** Sometimes the obstacle isn't that we don't believe. Sometimes it is **fear**. Fear of: What people will think. What people will say. What we may have to change. What surrender might cost us. How our lives may look different.

7. You Don't Have To Have It All Figured Out: The Gentiles in the synagogue were hungry to know God even though they had not taken the final step. Paul spoke directly to them. The message for us is powerful: **You do not have to have everything figured out before you surrender to God.** You do not have to know

every detail of the journey. You simply need to take the next step. “You don’t have to have it all figured out to be set free, you have to fully surrendered.” **Ask yourself: Am I allowing fear of people to keep me from fully following God?**

8. The Mountain Doesn’t Mean You Are Off Course: Paul’s journey reminds us that difficulty is not always evidence that we have missed God. Sometimes the hardest stretch of the journey is exactly what God uses to bring us into the next assignment. “Sometimes the hardest, most physically and emotionally grueling stretch of the journey is exactly what carries you into the place God has prepared for you next.” **When you are climbing:** Don’t quit simply because it is hard. Don’t assume the struggle means God has abandoned you. Don’t mistake difficulty for disobedience. **Keep climbing.** God may be preparing you for something on the other side of the mountain.

9. Things To Think About: If you’re in a “Perga season”: **Ask God: “What might You be preparing me for on the other side of this climb?”** Instead of walking through your difficult season with despair, ask God to help you walk through it **with purpose.** **If you’ve been standing at the edge:** Take the next step. Don’t allow fear of what others think to keep you from becoming who God has called you to be. “Don’t let fear rob you of your identity as a Child of God.”

Personal Reflection: Take a few moments this week to think about these questions: **What is my current “Perga”? What situation in my life feels like an interruption, setback, or detour? What would it look like to trust God in that season? What “mountain” am I currently facing? Am I willing to keep climbing even when I cannot see what is on the other side? Is fear of other people’s opinions keeping me from fully surrendering to God? What is the next step God may be asking me to take?**

This Week’s Takeaway: DON’T WASTE THE DETOUR. What looks like a setback may be part of God’s preparation.

What feels like an interruption may become an opportunity. What looks like the wrong direction may be the road God is using to get you where He wants you to go. **Keep climbing. Keep trusting. Keep surrendering.** You may not be able to see what God is preparing on the other side of the mountain—but you can trust the One who does.



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