

Even in the No...

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Acts / Acts 16:6–15

- **INTRODUCTION:** This morning we will be continuing in Acts 16. Would you turn to Acts 16:6-15 with me? (Prayer time, Faith promise- we are providing fried chicken and cheesy potatoes- feel free to bring other sides/desserts, etc. announcements)
- **Read, pray, drink**
- In scripture we consistently see the *PLAN OF GOD*. Ultimately, all of scripture is ABOUT GOD'S PLAN!
  - o God's plan for what? For salvation!
  - o When we look at scripture we see this plan all throughout. In the Old Testament for instance we see it in the various covenants. (Briefly discuss Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, exilic promises). In the New Testament we see it throughout with how God is faithful now matter what is going on; including in passages like we are seeing today!
- God's amazing plan doesn't just end in scripture. We also see it throughout history. For many years we've prayed for revival, not in the sense of a tent meeting, but in the sense of the Great Awakening.
- Last night, I was reading some Jonathan Edwards and came across some comments on the First Great Awakening that he made as it happened. He described talking to someone who's faith had been awakened.
- Here's what he saw in their life, "They lived by faith to

a great degree; they had a constant and extraordinary distrust of their own strength and wisdom and a great dependence on God for help.” As I read that, I couldn’t help but think about Paul, Silas, Timothy and what we see in Acts!

- But I also think that’s really the call of the revival that we have seen recently in America. It’s not about what WE CAN DO, IT’S ALL ABOUT GOD!

- It’s a cry that echoes Nehemiah 9:6, “YOU ARE THE LORD, YOU ALONE.”

- That’s truly what Jonathan Edwards saw in this person; a full reliance on *THE PLAN OF GOD!*

- The plan of God. The Plan of God is one of the most important things in the book of Acts and it is a major focus of our passage today.

- o Patrick Schreiner employs a Roman political term *boule* when talking about the will and plan of God in his book *The Mission of the Triune God: A Theology of Acts*.

§ Why am I mentioning this? Because God’s *boule*, or his will and plan for the world, is clear throughout our passage today.

§ If God had not sovereignly ordained the first half of our passage, then Paul, Silas, and Timothy would not have been in Philippi. That means that the second half of our passage never would have happened!

- So, keep this idea in mind of God’s *BOULE*, his will and plan, as we walk through this passage. The beauty of God’s plan is that it is ALSO CLEAR IN OUR LIVES TODAY!

- Just think, Acts is about regular people, like you and I, regular people like those moved in the GREAT AWAKENING, that God uses powerfully to reach the world! God can and WILL USE US! Passages like this help us to see that! God knows you and when we say that He made you uniquely, we genuinely mean it! God has specifically made you and gifted you for things HE HAS PLANNED FOR YOU!

- Main Point: *God's Boule (Plan and Will) for the world is good!*

- **BODY:** We start out by reading, *“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.”*- Acts 16:6-7 (Map)

- o Paul and Timothy travel across Turkey and they go towards Asia. God forbids them to go to Asia.

- § We don't fully know HOW this happens, but we know that Paul, Silas and Timothy do NOT go to Asia!

- o Why would this happen? Well, remember, the BOULE of GOD! GOD'S PERFECT PLAN! God wills that they should not go to Asia, so they don't go to Asia!

- § But also notice this. They go towards Asia and God stops them. They still have free will to try and go to Asia, but God does change their path.

- God's sovereignty does not eliminate our free will or take away our ability to make decisions! It does not mean that we shouldn't seek out GOD when we are making choices.

o WHAT IT DOES MEAN IS THAT GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER WHAT HAPPENS! God has CHOSEN to INCLUDE US IN HIS GREAT PLAN! We are included in God's REDEMPTIVE PLAN FOR THE WORLD! Praise the Lord!

§ Here, Paul going to Asia is not in God's plan and God redirects Paul.

· Instead of going to Asia, we see, *“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.”- Acts 16:8-10*

o Paul and his companions travel to Troas from the border of Mysia (Map and laser Pointer).

§ While there, Paul has a vision. This vision is going to shape the rest of their missions trip and in turn, it shapes much of Paul's ministry. The vision is of a man in Macedonia who calls for Paul to come to him!

· Paul immediately knows where the traveling group needs to go! He hears God speaking. The exact word, and I think this should SHED some light on HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD, is that Paul, “INFERS A TASK, or CALL” from this vision. Paul has *FAITH THAT GOD HAS SPOKEN!* It isn't always an audible voice; we are to *HAVE FAITH IN GOD'S PLAN AND DIRECTION!*

· The traveling group decides to go to Macedonia after

this call!

o Paul is in touch with the Holy Spirit and is relying on the Holy Spirit to guide them! He knows that this is no coincidence, hence how he makes his inference; he trusts that this is **TRULY THE LORD DIRECTING HIM!**

o Verse 10 has something extremely important in it! Look at a pronoun with me. We have gone from, **“THEY TRAVELED,”** to **“WE SOUGHT TO GO.”**

§ What has made that change? Luke has arrived! Yes, **LUKE TRAVELS WITH PAUL!**

· How can we know that the events of Acts are accurate? **LUKE LITERALLY IS THERE FOR MUCH OF IT!**

o Luke is a contemporary! For the remainder of the book, anytime we see this, “we” pronoun, it is a sign that **LUKE IS ON THE SCENE!**

o Not only does it add to the reliability of what is happening, Luke’s arrival also serves as a valuable reminder that these missionary journeys are not just Paul, Silas and Timothy out by themselves!

§ There are others who work with and alongside Paul! Luke is one of them, Titus is another, so are many others!

· Ministry is a **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY!** The Great commission is not something that is dependent upon a few; it is a call upon each and every one of us as believers!

o We see this throughout Acts as it is truly an **ALL-HANDS ON DECK** approach to reaching the world!

§ I want to challenge us very bluntly that if we want to see our community reached for the gospel it will take each and every one of us!

§ If you want to see the people of Hamilton and Nauvoo thriving in a deep relationship with Jesus; which as a Christian WE SHOULD WANT, it will require each and every one of us!

· God's PLAN IS BIG! It's bigger than any one or two of us! God's plan to reach the world requires all of us!  
o Let's be clear, this is not because God NEEDS US, it's because in God's love and goodness, in the innate value that He has given each and every one of us, HE INCLUDES US IN HIS PLAN!

§ That's part of the beauty of the Great Commission!

§ Our God knows each and every one of us and has set apart things for us to do to serve him and to reach our community!

o Now, practically, in the middle of our message, let's consider; DO I WANT TO BE A PART OF GOD'S PLAN? If not, WHY NOT?

· Now that Luke has joined and that a direction has been established we see, *“(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.”- Acts 16:11-12*

o (MAP AND LASER POINTER) From Troas, the traveling group goes to Samothrace. Then, they go to Neapolis and onto Philippi.

§ Although the individual towns may not seem important, they once again lend credence to what Luke is saying!

§ All of these little details matter! They build the trustworthiness of his account!

o Finally, the group ends up in Philippi. Philippi is the first place in Europe that Paul is recorded as preaching. It is an extremely important town at the time.

§ Philippi was inhabited largely by veterans of the Roman military; specifically by veterans of the Praetorian Guard which was an elite military unit responsible for protecting the Emperor.

- However, they did at times remove kings from power instead. So, they were very well paid, with their salaries supplemented by the emperor himself!

- They were extremely powerful and were extremely committed to Rome; meaning that on the surface, they were **NOT FRIENDLY TO CHRISTIANS!**

o In fact, Philippi was in many ways like a “mini-Rome.”

§ That’s actually how it was designed. It was built with a mini-forum and had many similarities in daily life.

§ It was an extremely wealthy city because of nearby mines.

- Philippi is quite different from the other cities that the gospel has been preached in. It is very different culturally.

o In turn, we will see the missiology and methodology of our missionaries change!

- We see that change in verses 13 and 14. “*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.”- Acts 16:13-14*

o Notice the major change. In the past, they have always found the local synagogue and begun there. Not in Philippi! In Philippi, they go to the gate to the riverside where they, “**SUPPOSED THERE WAS A PLACE OF PRAYER.**”

§ This is a very different type of ministry! You want to talk about cross-cultural, completely unreached people group ministry? That’s what is going on here!

· Paul typically started at the synagogue because Jews and Gentiles who knew the Old Testament and were waiting for the Messiah were there.

o Now, there is no synagogue to begin at!

o It requires a new way of reaching people; but notice, the message will be the same! They don’t give up, they don’t quit, they persevere, serving the LORD and **TRUSTING GOD TO PROVIDE!**

§ They are trusting God’s *BOULE* and that HE **BROUGHT THEM TO PHILLIPPI FOR A REASON!**

o They adapt and they come across a place where they have heard that people gather to pray! They decide to begin their ministry in Philippi **THERE!**

o One of the other unique things that we see is that the



gathering they join is made up of WOMEN! Why does this matter? Because women were marginalized and ignored in Roman Culture.

§ One of the things that was different about the early believers is that they WELCOMED women and slaves! The very people who were the most looked down on in society were welcomed into local churches!

• Why? Because the very reality of the gospel is one that requires humility! The simple reality is that what we are proclaiming is SALVATION THROUGH FAITH ALONE!

o It's salvation that rejects all of the good works that you have done, or think you have done and instead is focused on JESUS AND JESUS ALONE!

o Our very salvation is a cry of us saying, "I AM NOT ENOUGH!" It's open to ALL WHO REPENT AND BELIEVE, not just to the "elites."

• As Jonathan Edwards said, **"Christ has brought it to pass, that those that the Father has given him, should be brought into the household of God; that he, and his Father, and his people, should be as were one society, one family, that the church should be as it were admitted into the society of the blessed trinity."**

• What he's saying is that Jesus sacrifice has made it so that regardless of our past, regardless of our weaknesses, we can be in the presence of the Lord! This is because of GOD, not us!

• As we talk about Lydia, keep that in mind! Truly, our salvation is ALL ABOUT GOD'S PLAN and Lydia is a

great example of that!

§ One of these women is Lydia. Not a ton is known about Lydia. Still, let's talk about what we do know.

- Lydia is from Thyatira. Thyatira is in modern-day Turkey. She had come to Philippi because of her profession. She sells purple dyed clothes and goods.
  - o Purple was extremely difficult to harvest. (SLIDE) To do it, marine snails were collected by the thousands. As many as 250,000 of these snails were required to make 1 OUNCE OF DYE!

- o Each one of these snails had to be boiled for days which smelled awful and took lots of time. The other method was to HAND CRACK EACH SHELL and leave it in the sun for heat!

§ Tyre was famous for their dyes. It would cost upwards of a years salary just for 1 pound of purple cloth!

- Truly, it was reserved for ROYALTY!

- Lydia worked in Philippi selling purple cloth.

Remember what we said about Philippi; it's a wealthy town made up of retired Praetorians who were handsomely compensated even before investing in the mines of Philippi!

- o The point of Lydia's testimony is not her job though. Instead, we read that, "*THE LORD OPENED HER HEART TO PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT WAS SAID BY PAUL!*"

- *The verbal construction of this statement is fascinating. God opening her heart to pay attention is all active! Paul speaking? That's actually *PASSIVE!* Why would Luke do this?*

- *Because the EMPHASIS IS ON WHAT GOD DOES! HOW GOD'S PLAN SHAPES THIS INTERACTION!*
- § Hear me; you can't read scripture and leave questioning GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY!
- GOD IS ABSOLUTELY IN CONTROL and at work!
- Lydia's heart isn't opened by Paul, it's opened by GOD! Just like how Timothy wasn't inspired by Paul, GOD IS AT WORK HERE!
- o Behind every revival is GOD! It isn't some perfect message; it is GOD!
- Just think of the quote we started with from The Great Awakening. It wasn't about the perfect message from Jonathan Edwards, it was about deep conviction from God! It was people SOLD OUT IN FOLLOWING GOD; living lives that were SURRENDERED TO HIM!
- § The Lord clearly speaks to LYDIA and opens her heart so that she LISTENS to Paul!
- God truly is WORKING IN PHILIPPI!
- We see that in Lydia who doesn't just HEAR, SHE REPENTS AND BELIEVES!
- o We then read, *"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."* - Acts 16:15
- § Lydia is saved and baptized and then her household is saved and baptized!
- Listen, hear me, sharing the gospel with someone doesn't take years of knowledge. It's great to have some conversation starters and some strategies for sharing the gospel, but what ultimately speaks is the HOLY

**SPIRIT!**

o Lydia is **ECSTATIC AND WANTS TO SHARE HER FAITH!**

§ Think about when you first placed your faith in Jesus! You probably experienced some form of relief and hope and wanted to tell others!

· When we sing “Hide it under a bushel? No! I’m gonna let it shine” with children, it should also be a reminder to us to let our **FAITH SHINE!**

o Do you see how powerful it is when Lydia does **JUST THAT!**

§ Lydia shares her passion and her faith and her entire household is saved and baptized!

o Not only are Lydia and her family saved, she **INSISTS** that Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke and **ANYONE ELSE** with them comes and stays with her!

§ That’s quite the traveling party!

§ I think that’s really an example!

· What amazing love and hospitality we see from this new believer! **HOW SPECIAL!** Let’s not just write this off as culture, let’s ask ourselves a practical question; seeing this example from Lydia, do you **LOVE OTHER BELIEVERS?**

· What humility and love that Lydia has!

o Not only is hospitality displayed, I think we also see a **HUNGER FOR FURTHER GROWTH AND INSTRUCTION!**

§ By definition, housing these men would have meant further conversations and further opportunities to **GROW!**

§ All of this is a part of God's BOULE! When Paul was first turned away from Asia, it must have felt so hard and confusing. BUT LOOK AT WHAT GOD HAS DONE NOW!

- Lydia and her family have come to know the Lord and they are able to help reach Philippi and presumably THYATIRA, the city that Lydia is from that also makes an appearance in the 7 churches in Revelation 2 and 3.

- APPLICATION: Today, we've seen one of the more clear examples of God's plan working in the world! God literally REDIRECTS Paul, Silas, Timothy and the traveling party!

  - o Truthfully, from a human perspective, this is another passage where it seems that things are falling apart!

§ Paul and the group abandon their plans for an unrecorded reason and make a sudden 180 and go the other direction!

- But, it isn't a disaster after all!

  - o I think we see God work many times in these challenges! Just think about Joseph with me for a second, from Genesis.

§ (Enslaved, thrown in jail falsely, stuck in basically a cistern with a neck iron on, etc.)

§ Yet how does that end? Joseph is raised to power!

Why? BECAUSE OF GOD!

  - o In the same way, it seems that Paul and Silas are in trouble here! But they aren't! Instead, GOD IS GOING TO WORK THIS ALL OUT!

§ And HE DOES SO FAITHFULLY!

- Instead of a disaster, Paul and Silas travel and see a

new church planted!

- They see a group come to saving faith!

- Why? **BECAUSE THEY WERE FAITHFUL TO MINISTER!**

- Not just Paul and Silas, but also young Timothy, and Luke the Doctor and any others with them!

§ It took the faithfulness of all of these missionaries to reach this community!

§ In the same way, it will take the faithfulness of many to reach **OUR COMMUNITY!**

- Hear me, God has a greater plan than any of us can imagine. His plan, for the world to come to a personal relationship with Him, **INVOLVES EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US!**

We are called to **GMC-SIERRA** (God, Man, Christ, Salvation and share it with our world!

- Now hear me brothers and sisters, God can and **WILL USE YOU** in **HIS PLAN!**

- The question is, **WILL YOU FOLLOW HIM IN OBEDIENCE?**

§ This passage should leave us confident that even in the darkest hours, **GOD IS AT WORK AND HIS PLAN IS GREAT!**

- Pray