

Acts 15:36-16:5

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Daniel Good / General

· INTRODUCTION- ACTS 15:36-16:5

(Announcements- 3rd Wednesday this week- need help moving some tables after church, PRAYER MEETING)
(Read, pray, drink)

o INTRO- Cambridge 7- What was the cost?

Seemingly everything! Fame, fortune, opportunity!

Why? Because Jesus was WORTH IT!

6 students at Cambridge and 1 friend from the Royal Military academy who were commissioned by China Inland Mission- hudson taylor

They remained heavily involved in going and sending missionaries the REST OF THEIR LIVES!

What caused this? JESUS! That's the same thing that caused the burning desire in TIMOTHY, PAUL, BARNABAS, and SILAS, and EVEN JOHN MARK!

MAIN POINT: We are commissioned for a mission!

· **BODY:** Throughout the book of Acts, we see a few missionary journeys take place. Today, we see the beginning of the second major missionary journey.

o Oftentimes these are remembered as Paul's missionary journeys, but really, we need to understand that many people were a part of these journeys. It was not just Paul traveling around with the gospel!

§ If you recall, over the last few weeks, we saw the Jerusalem council which ruled on how one was saved,

followed by the letter that they sent to Antioch.

- Last week, we highlighted 3 greek words which meant, “To guide,” “beloved,” and “Sent.”

- We talked about how Judas and Silas, and likewise Paul and Barnabas were sent to guide the churches. We saw that they, themselves, were *guided by the Holy Spirit*. Then, we saw how Paul and Barnabas were **BELOVED!**

- o Paul, the very man who had driven many believers out of Jerusalem and had intensely persecuted the church in Jerusalem was *beloved!*

- § Finally, we saw how Judas and Silas were “sent off” or “released” from their commission to reach this community!

- Their commission was simple. Alongside Paul and Barnabas, expound on the letter sent from the Jerusalem council, helping the believers in Antioch to understand their faith more and to live it out!

- Today, we pick up after Judas and Silas are released. We start off by reading, ““And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”

- o Paul and Barnabas go back to Antioch for some time. They remain with the brothers teaching as we saw last week, but also united in fellowship.

- o We really do not know how long they are in Antioch, but after a while, Paul goes to Barnabas wanting to visit the churches they’ve preached to and helped plant.

- § I love the constant usage of “brother” or “brother and

sister” in the New Testament. After all, as believers, that’s what we are! We are a *FAMILY*, not only as a local church but also as a global church.

§ Paul considers these believers literally from other countries and other backgrounds, to be **BROTHERS!**

· I think that’s a really helpful thing for us to remember. What should our relationship be like as Christians?

Like a **FAMILY!**

o Regardless of background; regardless of anything else, if someone has placed their faith in Jesus and you have, then you are **FAMILY!**

§ Paul and Barnabas are clearly invested in these churches and they care about **THESE BELIEVERS!**

· That’s a part of ministry; investment. Whether we are in a paid position, or if we are giving our time in a lay position, we are called to be invested!

· In verses 37-38, we see a near fight break out. Look at what Luke wrote, *“Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.”*

o Barnabas wants to take John, also known as Mark; the man who would go on to write the gospel of Mark.

o Paul doesn’t want to take Mark. There’s a reason for this. In Acts 13:13 we read, *“Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem.”*

§ The other name for Mark? It’s John. This Mark is the same man who left them on their previous missions

trip.

§ Paul is worried that he can't be counted on. Paul wants someone who is really committed and will do the work. In English, we translate this as "Paul thought best." Another translation would be, "PAUL INSISTED!"

· PAUL INSISTS THAT THEY SHOULD NOT TAKE MARK!

§ Ministry requires some form of willingness to persevere; as Paul and Barnabas saw firsthand in Acts 14!

· There is concern from Paul that Mark will leave again.

· Now, let me be clear; the point of this passage is NOT to analyze whether Paul is right or wrong in what he says and how he feels.

· When we do that, we lose sight of what GOD IS DOING IN THIS VERY SITUATION!

o Because here's the thing; GOD IS WORKING!

o I think Kent Hughes provides good insight though when he says, "Our judgement goes with Paul, but our hearts go with Barnabas."

§ In other words, from our human perspective, Paul's argument makes sense, but we still LOVE BARNABAS!

· As is often the case as God works, His plan is not immediately clear. Instead, look at what we see in verses 39-41. *"And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he went*

through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra.”

o It looks like a massive disaster! These two Christian leaders have a falling out. Not just a falling out, a **SHARP DISAGREEMENT!** The word for this *παροξυσμὸς*, literally means *sharp disagreement*.

· This word is only used one other time in the New Testament. It is used in Hebrews 10:24 and is often translated *provoke*. But even then, in that verse, the connotation is one of strength and determination!

o This is a **SHARP DISAGREEMENT!** The root of this word *oxys* (οξύς) actually means sour wine. We see the word used like that in Matthew, Mark, Luke AND JOHN when talking about the wine that our savior is offered!

§ This word carries a **SERIOUSLY NEGATIVE MEANING!** This is a severe fight! These two don't leave with a hug and a handshake. They are angry and upset and decide that they need to split. They are *poisoned against one another*.

§ I know that when we hear this, there is a temptation towards panic because there isn't unity! I know that many Christians today have been heavily hurt by disunity and so it is something that is on the hearts of many believers.

§ Yet, I want to give us a challenge. “Perfect unity” from a human definition where everyone gets along at all times will **NEVER** happen!

· Even in the midst of the “disunity” do you see what God is doing? God has doubled the number of places

that Paul and Barnabas are going!

- See, from a human perspective, it seems like satan has won! These two LEADERS AND GUIDES have split; they have seemingly been driven apart in a total lack of unity!

- o But, what we really see is that Mark and Barnabas go to Cyprus and Paul and Silas go to the churches in what is now Modern-Day Turkey.

- § Yes, this is the same Silas as we saw last week who was sent from the Church in Jerusalem.

- Do you see what I'm seeing? Instead of one pair of missionaries, there are now 2! The ministry has been DOUBLED!

- o Now the church in Antioch has sent out 2 teams instead of 1. Let's be clear, this is not me encouraging arguments, I just think we need to remember that God can use everything! God is sovereign over all things! There is no little fight that can RUIN GOD'S PLAN!

- § God is working even in what looks bad!

- Now, as the book of Acts progresses, we see Paul and Silas on their missions' trip. We read, "*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.*"

- o Paul and Silas go to Lystra and Derbe as we see at the end of chapter 15. Before we even get into Timothy, just consider that! The same place that Paul had been stoned, he LONGED TO SEE!

- § He truly loved these people!

o Now, let's talk about Timothy! Timothy will eventually have two letters in the New Testament addressed to him.

§ But, there's a lot more to Timothy than just receiving two letters!

o One of the first things that we see about Timothy is that he is the *Son of a Jewish woman who was a believer* while his *father was a Greek*.

§ Let's establish a few things about this statement, because it is very IMPORTANT!

· First, notice that Timothy's mother, and as we read in 2 Timothy 1:5, his grandmother, are believers. His father is not. Notice though that his father is NOT A BELIEVER!

o Timothy is not the "stereotype." He isn't circumcised, meaning that he wasn't raised in a seriously committed Jewish family.

o Jewish people would have looked down on him. Yet, at the same time, he isn't truly a Greek.

§ In culture, that could have been an isolating place to be. BUT, and don't EVER FORGET THIS, in the FAMILY OF GOD, there is a place for everyone!

o There's something else that I want us to notice about Timothy. Timothy is *well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium*.

§ I think sometimes we think of Timothy as some random young kid who Paul just takes and trains into being a missionary. That's not the truth though!

· Timothy is respected and well thought of by believers! Timothy has been called to ministry, as we see in 1

Timothy 4:14. Paul is helping Timothy.

· Paul can't put fire for the Lord in his heart, but what he DOES DO, is see someone who is ON FIRE FOR GOD and he FANS THE FLAME!

o He provides mentorship, guidance, wisdom and HELP as Timothy ministers!

o Paul though doesn't set Timothy on fire for God! Why? Because no MAN CAN! Only the Holy Spirit can light us on fire! Only the Holy Spirit can soften our heart to God!

§ This should give us great hope! When we think about discipleship, it isn't our job to SET SOMEONE ON FIRE WITH GOD, it's our job to walk through life together, praying for them, passing on wisdom and guidance and encouraging them to walk with God!

• Timothy has already been GIFTED AND IS SET ON FIRE! He's been called by God! He's already been GIVEN A MISSION! Now, he's about to be COMMISSIONED!

· Now, let's look at verse 3 to see what Paul has in mind for this young, committed believer. *“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.”*

o Paul wants to take Timothy with him! This is similar to Jesus and his disciples and what we just said that we should do in so-called “discipleship.”

o We are to go together! Paul though has a concern. His concern? The Jewish believers will reject timothy

because he isn't baptized.

§ So, out of love for these brothers; in almost a *peacekeeping conviction*, Paul has Timothy circumcised. This also means that Timothy agrees to it.

- Remember, the Jerusalem council says that circumcision saves NO ONE! But, in this case, it is what is needed to be able to REACH this population!

- Hudson Taylor moved to East Asia as a missionary, inspiring the Cambridge 7 that we talked about earlier and soon made many people upset. See, he left his “western” clothes and haircut behind and adopted the traditional dress and hair style of the locals in Shanghai.

- o Why would he do that? To be heard more clearly! See, he didn't want ANYTHING ELSE to distract from the gospel of Jesus!

§ In 1879, C.H. Spurgeon had the chance to interview Hudson Taylor. Listen to what he would say about the clothing change. “Dear, good brother, this is one reason of your success, you become a Chinaman to the Chinese, and you will gain the Chinese.”

- For Paul and Timothy, if they were to reach the Jewish people and the gentiles, they had to be able to do both!

- o It's very similar to Paul telling Timothy to be circumcised! It's so that he will be heard more clearly and that no one will argue about this one, non-salvific thing!

§ So what is the conviction we see from Paul and Timothy? It's a conviction to put the gospel of Jesus

first, regardless of the cost.

§ Here, the cost is significant pain and inconvenience!

o The tradeoff though? Timothy was listened to by the Jewish believers. I can't stress enough; Paul is not saying that the Jewish believers are RIGHT, he IS committed to reaching them though!

· That's what we continue to see in verses 4-5 as we read, "*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.*"

o Paul, Silas and Timothy travel on! They go through the various cities in Asia Minor and begin to deliver the word from the Jerusalem council.

§ What was that word again? The word is simple!
SALVATION COMES THROUGH JESUS ALONE!

o What's the result of their correct teaching and encouragement? The churches grow in strength of faith AND in numbers!

§ These two things are linked together and are BOTH important for a church!

§ If members don't grow in their faith, then numerical growth is pointless! Everyone will be shallow and there is a risk that the local church loses its focus!

· On the other hand, if there is no numerical growth, a church will eventually die and more importantly, the local assembly then is not fulfilling the great commission of **TAKING THE GOSPEL TO THEIR COMMUNITY!**

§ In this case though, we see the local church truly experiencing growth that comes from God! Both in numbers and in depth!

- These members are deeply rooted, ready to stand against any storm that may come!
- That's the entire goal of this trip! The beginning of the second missionary journey is ALL ABOUT further establishing these churches!

o In some ways, it is similar to the mission that Titus has on Crete in Titus! It isn't about starting a new work, it is about STRENGTHENING existing churches!

§ In some ways, that also is where we find ourselves in our modern context! We'll talk more about this in just a minute.

- **CONCLUSION:** As we move into a time of conclusion, let's be careful not to miss the fact that we have seen some very important events today.

o **Theologically speaking, one of the biggest things we have seen again today is the SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD! We also see THE CHALLENGE OF THE GREAT COMMISSION MADE CLEAR!**

§ The book of Acts is often limited to being a book about evangelism and missions. But do you know what I see constantly in this book? GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY!

- So today, wherever you are in life, let me remind you that God is sovereign! It is truly NO ACCIDENT that you are here today!
- God is sovereign and you are here for a reason! Not only are you HERE at GPC for a reason, you are ON

EARTH at this time for a REASON! God is in control!

- Today, as we close out, I have two applications. One for us as individuals and one for us as a congregation.
- o First, as individuals, I want to take a minute and talk about the *Traits of a True Disciple*. Timothy is often talked about with discipleship, but what I think we sometimes miss are some of his core characteristics.

§ *First, Timothy lived out his faith!*

§ *Secondly, Timothy was hungry to grow!*

§ *Thirdly, Timothy paid the price!*

- o Let's talk about these.

§ Timothy lived out his faith

- Timothy spent his life following the Lord and leading in the church, specifically in Ephesus

- Even before then, even before he meets Paul, he is well known because he serves the Lord consistently!

- o People give good testimony about his faith! We see this throughout his life and that includes HIS VERY OWN COMMISSIONING WHICH PAUL REFERENCES!

- Timothy's elders laid their hands on him and COMMISSIONED HIM!

- o That's part of being a disciple! We need to live out our faith! That's what Jesus himself calls us to do!

§ Secondly, Timothy wanted to grow!

- We see this both in Acts and also in the epistles to Timothy. But in discipleship, the person being discipled has to WANT TO GROW!

- o If they don't want to grow, then the amount of time and intentionality is wasted! Of course, we aren't the

ones responsible for growth, but, we want to walk with people who WANT THAT!

§ Finally, Timothy paid the price

· Whether through being circumcised, or even through leaving his family, Timothy paid the price of following God! It wasn't always easy or convenient.

o We talk about how salvation is free. And yes, SALVATION IS FREE! But, part of sanctification- that is our gradual growing righteousness; is a DESIRE TO FOLLOW GOD MORE AND MORE EVERY SINGLE DAY!

§ It will cost us our freedom, it will cost us our life!

· Mark 10:17-22 talks about this heavily.

o (SUMMARIZE)

· As a church, I think this passage challenges us to be *An Exporting Congregation*. In other words, we are to be a congregation that **TRAINS, EQUIPS, and SENDS OUT**; just like the church in Antioch with Paul, Barnabbas and Mark and the church in Derbe with Timothy!

o Green Dot/Red Dot

o Opportunities? Bible study, Sunday school, always happy to meet to talk and to grow together! (We want to encourage discipleship!) Maybe the cost of being an EXPORTING CONGREGATION, is giving up 30 minutes to meet with an older believer, or a younger one! We each play a role in being an EXPORTING CONGREGATION!

WE ALSO DO THIS THROUGH OUR SUPPORT OF MISSIONARIES!

§ Discipleship web! If you are willing to spend time with someone else growing together, let me know! We'd love to help facilitate that!