



Sermon Series: Acts

Sermon Title: Whatever It Takes

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Jesus redirects the willing to reach the lost.

He Paid a Price

Paul returns to Derbe and Lystra and meets Timothy, a young disciple with a strong reputation among local believers. Paul brings him onto the team, then does something surprising - he has Timothy circumcised (**Acts 16:1-3**).

Just one chapter earlier, at the Jerusalem Council, Paul had argued the opposite: circumcision isn't required for salvation. This isn't a contradiction. For Timothy, it was never a salvation question - it was about strategy. His mother was Jewish, and Jews in that region would have seen an uncircumcised "Jew" standing next to Paul as rebellion against his own heritage, before a single word about Jesus got said. So Timothy went through it - not to be saved, but so people would stick around long enough to listen.

Compare that to Titus, a Gentile Paul refused to circumcise, because in that situation people were trying to make it a requirement for salvation. Same act, two different scenarios - one where the gospel was under attack, one where the mission needed it. That distinction matters for us too. Not everything that needs to go in your life is a sin issue. Sometimes the question isn't "*is this wrong,*" but "*is this in the way of someone hearing me talk about Jesus.*" Timothy didn't change the message - he changed himself so the message could get through.

God Closed Two Doors

Right after Timothy joins the team, things look like they're clicking - churches strengthened, numbers growing daily. Then everything changes. The Holy Spirit keeps Paul's team from preaching in the province of Asia. They try Bithynia next - same answer, this time from "the Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:6-7). Luke uses two names for the same Spirit, back to back, making sure

nobody misses whose hand was on this. Neither Asia nor Bithynia were bad destinations - Paul would later spend years in Ephesus, the capital of Asia, and churches would eventually rise up in Bithynia too. God wasn't saying no to the mission. He was saying no to the timing and the messenger.

Notice what's missing from these verses: any explanation of how the door closed. We don't know exactly what it looked like, only that it happened twice, and Paul trusted it was God enough not to force it open. Instead of sulking, he kept moving - and at Troas, God gave him something specific: a vision of a man from Macedonia asking for help ([Acts 16:9-10](#)). Paul's team talked it through, and once they were sure, they went. That's usually how guidance works - not a full map handed to you upfront, but a next step and a willingness to adapt.

God Used Two Ordinary People

Look at who this passage puts at the center of the story. Timothy isn't a celebrity - he's a disciple with a good local reputation, the kind of guy people in his own church could vouch for. Then in verse 10, the pronouns quietly shift to "we" and "us" - Luke, the writer of this book, has stepped into his own story with no fanfare and no introduction ([Acts 16:10](#)). Two ordinary names get folded into the biggest missionary journey in church history. That's how God builds His kingdom - one person telling another. Almost all of us are here today because someone told us about Jesus. You may not even remember their name. God used them anyway.

Be a willing person guided by God, so others can hear about Jesus. That's what happened with Timothy. That's what happened with Paul's team at Troas. It's what got the gospel to Macedonia, to Lystra and Iconium, and eventually to wherever someone first told you about Jesus. This week, ask what you might need to lay down, what closed door you're still camped in front of, and who's still waiting to hear it from you. Be willing. He'll steer. They'll hear.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Is there something in your life that isn't sinful but still builds a wall between you and someone hearing about Jesus from you? What is it?**
- 2. Read Acts 16:1-5. Why did Paul choose to circumcise Timothy right after arguing the opposite at the Jerusalem Council? What made this a mission issue rather than a salvation issue?**
- 3. Read Acts 16:6-10. How did Paul discern that the Holy Spirit was closing doors rather than testing his faith to push through?**
- 4. Have you ever treated a closed door - a job, a relationship, a plan - as proof you'd failed? How might this passage change how you see it?**
- 5. Who is someone God used to reach you with the gospel? What's one step you could take this week to be that person for someone else?**