

Acts 16 – 23 August 2020

“Couldn’t Plan It If You Tried”

Introduction

Chap 13-14 – Paul and Barnabas have returned from the 1st Missionary trip thru ½ of modern Turkey

Chap 15 – Question of keeping the law was dealt with

Now Paul has chosen Silas for them to return to the places Paul’s already been to, to strengthen them

But then what? But then where?

Very often in life we have the tools & the passion, but we don’t know where God wants us to apply it!

Think of it from a different time perspective: Have you ever looked back on a job you got and said, “Wow, I couldn’t have planned that if I tried”?

Today, 3 tips for navigating thru changing circumstances

1st Tip for navigating thru changing circumstances is to Listen To The Holy Spirit (Chap 16:1-15)

Read Vs 1-5

1. This is where Paul famously meets Timothy of Lystra, who becomes a beloved son in the faith.
 - a. Lystra – the very city Paul was stoned to death, the first time he was here.
 - b. Interesting that the place of Paul's greatest physical suffering was also the place of Paul's greatest spiritual new life thru Timothy!
2. II Tim 1:5 tells us his mother was Eunice & grandma Lois who are faithful believers.
3. Why have him circumcised in Act 15 just said that you don't have to do these things?
 - a. Although Acts 15 decided the Lord doesn't want anyone to keep the Law of Moses, it also decided we should abide by the law of love.
 - b. Listening to the Spirit will have us limit our liberties as to not needlessly offend others.

Read Vs 6-10

1. Twice here the Lord denies them to go before directing them toward Troas.
 - a. Maybe the Lord gave them a vision or dream to change direction.
 - b. Maybe He just didn't allow them to find a "train ticket" or something very earthly.
 - c. Whether spiritual or physical re-direction, the Lord uses both.
2. Troas – there are two remarkable events.
 - a. #1 - God specifically leads them to Macedonia
 - i. God often is silent or says no to re-direct us before saying yes.
 - ii. Think of all the problems God put the prophets into before bring them success
 - b. #2 – God brought them the Physician Like
 - i. Vs 8 & 10 10 – "they" and then "we".
 - ii. W/o God's re-direction & listening to H S, wouldn't have Gospel of Luke nor Acts.

Read Vs 11-15

1. What a beautiful blessing - Lydia gets saved!
 - a. But ya couldn't have planned it!
 - b. Re-directed to Troas then to Philippi has brought this about.
2. Notice vs 13 – Paul went to the river.
 - a. If no synagogue, Jews would go to the river
 - b. Paul's just doing what comes nature
3. Paul is open and free-flowing to listen to H. S.
 - a. If he was only seeking the “Macedonian Man”, he may have missed Lydia's need.
 - b. Listening to the Spirit will compel us to always be ready to be re-directed.

So ultimately listening to the Spirit brings

1. Humility to not offend others – as Timothy was circumcised.
2. Fruit in relationships – as Luke & Lydia
3. Flexibility – to go where God leads

2nd Tip for navigating thru changing circumstances is don't change your goal just b/c you're pressed by the enemy (Chap 16:16-24)

Read Vs 16

1. Possessed w/ the spirit of divination
 - a. Literally – w/ the spirit of Python
 - b. Python was worshipped at Delphi
 - c. Even today Delphi is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site
2. Greek / Roman Mythologies are all based on
 - a. Distorting the true Biblical story
 - i. Distorted stories of the Flood of Noah
 - b. Demonic activity
 - i. As we see here in this story

Read Vs 17-18

1. Paul recognized this as a Biblical, demonic spirit, not as separate religious system to learn.
2. Demons know they can't beat the Gospel message, so they try fitting in right alongside.

Read Vs 19-21

1. Notice that their accusation was the Paul was teaching lies, but their actual problem was their loss of power, money and position.
2. It's the same today – people complain Biblical principles should be taught b/c they're lies, when they really don't want to loss what they have.

Read Vs 22-24

1. The enemy doesn't complain if you're just asking them to “add” Jesus to what they're already doing.
2. But if you're asking them to turn from idolatry and false worship of self or stuff...”thems are fighting words”.

Application

1. These men thought THEY were in charge, but God was using them to direct Paul where He needed him to be.

2. Don't change the goal of reaching souls.
3. God can even turn the wickedness of man into opportunities to glorify Himself
4. Damsel was being used of men.
 - a. They didn't care for her
 - b. Next we'll see, God uses these men to bring salvation to Philippian jailer

3rd Tip for navigating thru changing circumstances is to always have your mind set on helping others (Chap 16:25-40)

Read Vs 25

1. There's always a way to bless others.
 - a. If you can use your feet to go, then go.
 - b. If you can't do that use your voice.
 - c. If you can't do that use your hands.
 - d. If you can't do that use your mind & pray.

2. Songs of praise brings us into right mental place
 - a. Jericho – Marching around blowing the trumpets of victory
 - b. As David played his songs of praises demons fled from Saul.

Read Vs 26

1. Now it's evident that God has allowed this pain & imprisonment to further His kingdom.

Read Vs 27-29

1. Not only was Paul's mind on helping these prisoners, but also on helping the guards!
2. Notice Paul had to act quickly to help the men
 - a. He wasn't ambivalent, but intentional
 - b. Do you say, "oh I'll help them if it's convenient for me" or would you go out of your way to help?

Read Vs 30-32

1. Short version of the Gospel – believe on Jesus.
2. Vs 31 – This msg (believe on Jesus) needs applied to each member of the household.
3. Vs 32 – Msg WAS spoken to the whole house
4. Paul stick around to complete giving the Gospel b/c his mind is on others and not on his own escape to protection.

Read Vs 33-34

1. Now a converted new life, demonstrates THIS VERY SAME fruit of giving and helping others.
 - a. This is always the goal – reproduce others who seek the same goals.
 - i. Share the gospel
 - ii. Show fruit of helping others

2. God has a purpose in our pain.
 - a. Think of all the people David helped while waiting to take the throne in God's timing.
 - b. Think of all the character growth Israel had while wondering in the wilderness while waiting for the Promised Land.
 - c. Daniel – taken to Babylon, much crimes against him. Used to glorify God b4 kings!!
 - d. If you are bitter b/c of the pain, you'll never see the people that need your help.

Read Vs 35-40

1. They didn't assert their rights as Romans just to show power over the leaders.
 - a. As if some selfish power-trip.
2. They did it to be able to go to the Philippian church and not be rushed out of town.
3. Their heart was to go encourage the Philippian church before leaving town.
 - a. Always thinking of others.

Conclusion

So couldn't haven't planned it if he tried, we've seen 3 tips for navigating thru changing circumstances

1. **Listen to the Holy Spirit**

- a. God adjusts us to where we need to be
- b. There're good things awaiting in a new direction – like Luke & Lydia

2. **Don't change your goal just b/c you're pressed by the enemy**

- a. God knows how to use even the sin of man to accomplish His will and purposes.
- b. In fact, an attack by the enemy may just mean you're being highly effective!

3. **Always have your mind set on helping others**

- a. Don't rob yourself of seeing God bless others b/c you have "in-grown eyeballs".
- b. God has a purpose in the pain, look for it.