

# (Acts) Lead by the Spirit

by Brian Brodersen

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*The sermon highlights the importance of flexibility, compromise, and working together in ministry, even in the face of disagreement.*

**Duration:** 59:59

**Scripture:** Acts 16:4-6, Acts 16:10-11, 1 Corinthians 9:6, 1 Peter 5:13

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Faith Guidance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his experiences of preaching the gospel in different places and the varying responses they received. They encountered aggressive and violent reactions in one location, leading them to seek another place for outreach. In contrast, in a different direction, they found a receptive audience who eagerly listened to their message and accepted the Lord. The speaker emphasizes that God reveals things to us gradually and through perseverance, and that we must trust Him and take steps of faith. He also highlights the importance of seeking God's guidance and discussing and praying together before making decisions.

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## Transcript

Let's turn tonight to Acts chapter 15, verse 36. So as we pick up here in Acts chapter 15, just to refresh your memory, the apostles had needed to go from Antioch up to Jerusalem because there were certain men that came from Jerusalem and they had come bringing a message that the Gentile believers needed to keep the law of Moses if they were really going to be saved. In essence, they were saying to them they needed to convert to Judaism if they were going to be genuinely Christians.

And we saw how Paul and Barnabas, they contended with them over this matter. And then the decision was made for them to go to Jerusalem and to get the word from the leadership in Jerusalem on the issues that were brought up. And so they went to Jerusalem and there Peter and James stood up and they both put forth the case that was in support of the case that Barnabas and Saul were supporting, that the Gentiles did not need to come under the Mosaic law.

That there were a few things they needed to just be sensitive to because of their relationship with the Jews, but they were not to come under the bondage of the law. And so they sent the apostles back to Antioch with a letter from Jerusalem, assuring the brethren there in Antioch that they had not sent a message to them, as these men had purported, that they did not need to worry about the law of Moses and that they could just carry on in their relationship with the Lord. And so when they went back with this

letter, there were two men that also joined them from Jerusalem.

They were Judas and Silas, and they stayed in Antioch for a period of time and they were ministering to the people there. And then Judas headed back to Jerusalem with some others and Silas, he decided to stay on there in Antioch. And along with Paul and Barnabas, they were teaching and preaching the word of the Lord there in the church in Antioch.

And so we pick up where we left off then tonight in verse 36 of chapter 15. And it says, Then after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing. So this is what really sparked the second missionary journey of Paul.

It was a desire to go back and to visit those people that they had ministered among and to visit the churches that they had planted on their first missionary journey. So Paul says to Barnabas, Let's go and visit those guys. Let's go and see how they're doing in the Lord.

Now, Barnabas was determined to take with him John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. Now, those of you that have been studying with us, you remember that incident that they're referring to here, how John Mark had been traveling with them.

But for reasons unknown to us, he decided to leave off in the journey and head back to Jerusalem. And we find out from Paul's attitude here regarding Mark joining them on the second missionary journey that he thought that Mark had really dropped the ball, that he thought that Mark had, you know, stepped away from something because of fear or weakness. And he saw Mark as a liability rather than an asset to a second missionary journey.

So Paul is not in support of Mark going along. And then in verse thirty nine, we read in the contention became so sharp that they departed from one another. So the contention between Paul and Barnabas.

Now, here were two men who were great friends. They were ministry partners. They had done so much together in the Lord.

But now they've got a sharp difference of opinion over whether or not Mark should participate in the second journey. And the contention between them was so intense that they decided that it was time to part ways. Now, in one sense, that's a sad thing that they were unable to, you know, work through this.

But yet we do need to understand that this wasn't the end of their relationship. And I think clearly from what we know from the rest of the New Testament, this was a temporary breach within their working relationship. But it was definitely sorted out in the future.

Now, Barnabas and Mark, it says that Barnabas chose Mark, took Mark and they sailed to Cyprus. Now, this is the last we hear of Barnabas and Mark in the Acts of the Apostles. But it's not the last time that Barnabas and Mark were involved in ministry with Paul.

If you just read Acts, that's what you might be led to conclude. You might think that they had this sharp division, they parted ways and they never saw each other again. And obviously this was the end of their friendship.

Not so. Because as we go into Paul's letters, he makes reference to both Mark and to Barnabas writing to churches that they had not yet even ministered to at this point. So what it shows us is that they teamed up again later.

So they worked out their differences and they continued to minister together in the future. Now, regarding Mark, although Paul did not feel that he was fit to go with them on that journey later on, Paul saw Mark as a very valuable helper. And in his epistle to the Colossians, for example, he in writing to them at the end of the epistle, chapter four, verse 10, he says, Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, greets you, indicating that Mark was actually with him when he sent the letter to Colossae.

And then in writing to Timothy, listen to what he says to Timothy recorded in Second Timothy for 11. He said, get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for the ministry. And then one other occasion, Paul, in writing to Philemon in verse 24, he said, Mark, my fellow laborer, greets you.

Not only did he become helpful in the ministry to Paul, but Peter mentions Mark as well. First, Peter 5:13, Peter refers to Mark as his son. He said, my son, Mark, greets you.

And then, of course, Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark and he certainly didn't write it, you know, in those early days, but he would have written it later. So the point is this, that although Mark left off in the early days of ministry, although he lacked faith, he was intimidated. He whatever the reason for his bailing out on them.

We see that he got his act together ultimately, and he became very helpful to the apostles in their ministry. Now, Paul, in writing to the Corinthians and remember at this stage when Barnabas and Paul separated ways, they'd not yet gone to Corinth. But evidently they teamed up together later because Paul, when he's writing to the Corinthians in the ninth chapter, the sixth verse of the first epistle, he says, is it only Barnabas and I that have no right to refrain from working? So the church in Corinth knew Barnabas and Paul implies through that statement that he and Barnabas were still partnered in the ministry.

And all of that information is given to you for this reason, to say this, that we all sometimes make mistakes, we can all sometimes drop the ball, we can fail at times, but God isn't finished with us. Thank God. We can move on and we can succeed in ministry, even if we've had a temporary setback.

And likewise, even if we sometimes have disagreements with people that we're ministering in, it doesn't have to mean the end of a relationship. God can work things out if we let him, and although we might sharply disagree over certain things, we can still go on to agree to disagree agreeably and work together in the future. And that's what you see happened here in this situation.

And, you know, I've had these kinds of things over the years. I can relate to this. I've had people that I've worked together with in ministry and we've had great times of ministry together.

And then we've had points of sharp disagreement. And sometimes so sharp was our disagreement that we had to not work together for a while. But yet, as time passes and God works by his spirit and he touches our hearts and we're able to work through things and we're able to come back and be reconciled and even again, work together.

And I can think of people that are ministering with me now that we've had a few times where it's been a bit rough in our relationships, but yet God's helped us to work through those things and we continue on with a great working relationship. And that's. The way it works in the body of Christ, because we're family,

because we're we're God's people, we're his children and we're connected to one another and we're we're working with each other.

So we do forgive each other and we do believe that God gives second and third and fourth and fifth and sixth chances and seventh and right on down the line. And so we need to realize that in the case of these men here, that this wasn't the end of their working relationship together. It wasn't the end of their fellowship by any means, but at this time it was a time of of separation in the ministry.

And I might add this, I think that it was highly probable that God was somehow allowing this to happen. Because, you see. Paul and Barnabas were in many ways equals the work was so vast and the need was so great to have these two guys teamed up together, although it was great for them.

It wasn't the most efficient way to get the word out. How much better for Paul to have a team that could go in one direction and Barnabas, who has the same credentials in a sense that Paul does the same kind of gifting in the same abilities to have a team and go in another direction. They're going to double their capacity for ministry by splitting up at this point.

And so I look at this as something that wasn't, you know, this just, you know, unfortunate development, but yet something that that God allowed to occur, a disagreement, a sharp disagreement so that he could really double the effort so he could get Barnabas out on his own or Paul out on his own. However, you look at it and the work could then be expanded. And, you know, we see that happen many times in ministry today.

Sometimes you have a team of people working together in a church and after some time they start to sort of. You know, disagree with each other over different things and it becomes a bit uncomfortable and it seems like what had been for a long time, a good working relationship just isn't working that well anymore. And so they decide, all right, we're going to, you know, I decided I'm going to take off.

I'm going to go do something else. And they go out and they go and they end up planning another church somewhere. And then as time passes, they're able to come back and say, you know, we're brothers, we love each other, let's work together.

We had that moment of difference. But look what the Lord's done to it. Look how God has used it and how God has spread the work.

And sometimes the Lord uses those things because, you know, we're not always. Willing on our own, sometimes to take a step and sometimes the Lord has to make things uncomfortable and sort of kick us out of the nest. By creating an uncomfortable situation.

Because if the situation remains comfortable, we would never think to venture beyond it. Oh, this is so nice, so wonderful. We're all here, just huddled together, having a great time.

But yet there's a whole world out there that hasn't heard yet, and we're all here together having a great time. Well, why doesn't somebody go out there all, but, you know, it's so good here, we don't want to go out there. Let's just stay here, huddled together, enjoying this moment.

And yet you see, the Lord wants to get things spread out. So sometimes he allows some of these things to occur, these differences of opinion, these. You know, one person feels one way, another feels strongly the other way, and so it leads to people saying, OK, well, forget it, then I'm I'm out of here.

But. The Lord sovereignly working behind the scenes and he uses those things. Now, sometimes people misinterpret all of this, too, and use these kinds of stories like this one as an excuse to justify, you know, things that they're doing that aren't necessarily right.

If you do have a division and things aren't, you know, you're not able to work together and you decide, OK, the Lord's moving me on. Some guys move right next door and they say, hey, you ought to come with me. And that.

Is not what I'm talking about, that's not right, that's where church splits and things like that happen and what they end up doing is just dividing the group that's there. God doesn't necessarily want to divide the group that's there, he wants to send a person out to reach a whole nother group. So the idea is not to move next door in.

And set up camp and then call everybody on the phone and say, hey, why don't you check us out this Sunday? And people do that. That's not what we're talking about, but the Lord moves people out and that's what he did here, I think clearly God was working behind the scenes to get these two great men, these two great leaders out on their own so the work itself could be expanded. So Paul.

He chose Silas. Silas was one of those men that had come from Jerusalem and he was a prophet like Judas, he ended up staying. Evidently, it seems that he and Paul just really hit it off.

They they really connected with one another and Silas wanted to assist Paul, he wanted to work with him. And so Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Now, remember, their goal was to go back and to visit the churches. And then they had the disagreement and then Barnabas, he took Mark and he went back to Cyprus. Remember, they had ministered in Cyprus.

Barnabas was from Cyprus and they so they went back to Cyprus. And it seems that that's where they concentrated their efforts. But Paul went back to the places that they had previously visited, but not taking the same route that they had taken earlier.

Paul sort of comes in the back way this time. He goes through Syria and then through Cilicia, coming from the southeast, moving toward the northwest rather than before. They sort of went across and then came up.

So Paul takes instead of sailing like they did originally to Cyprus and then from Cyprus to Perga, Paul goes on foot and ministers along the way to the churches in Syria and Cilicia. Then he came to Derby and Lystra. Now, remember, this is the place where some years earlier Paul had been stoned.

Remember in our study a few weeks ago when they had come into this area, though, the Lycaonians thought that that Barnabas and Paul were gods come down to them in the form of men. And they tried to worship them and they the apostles persuaded them not to do that. And then certain Jews came and stirred up the people and they they dragged Paul out of the city and they had stoned him, thought that they had killed him.

So this is the place now. Some years later, he's coming back to visit once again. They did plant a church when they were there.

So he's coming back to follow up with them. So coming to Derby and Lystra, behold, a certain disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed. But his father was a Greek.

He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium, and Paul wanted to have him go with him. So here's a young man who we don't really know how old he was at this time, maybe in his late teens, early 20s, perhaps, but he's well spoken of by the brethren. He's a genuine disciple.

He's a true follower of Jesus. And the people there in the church, they see him as a person who God is working in and God's hand is upon his life. And when Paul comes and meets him, Paul senses the same thing.

And later on, Paul would write to the different churches and he would mention Timothy. And of course, he wrote two letters to Timothy as well later. But as he would talk about Timothy, Paul would say things like, you know, I don't have anybody like Timothy.

He has my heart. He has my mind. So Paul took this young man, he saw this anointing upon his life, he saw God's hand upon his life and he took him and he made him really his understudy.

He took Timothy and he was just going to take him and invest his life in him. And at the end of his life, Paul basically turns his ministry over to Timothy. That's what Second Timothy is all about.

It's the final epistle of Paul to Timothy. And he gives him instruction. I'm leaving.

The time of my departure is at hand. Timothy, this is what you've got to do. But here's where that relationship first developed.

And so Paul wanted to take him. And so he took him before taking him on the journey. He took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Now, some people say, well, why in the world would Paul do that? I mean, didn't they just have that big meeting in Jerusalem where they decided that the Gentiles did not need to be circumcised? They didn't need to keep the law of Moses. And now what's Paul doing, getting Timothy circumcised? Well, remember, Timothy was Jewish. His mother was Jewish.

And so he would have been recognized as a Jew among the Jews. Even to this day, if your mother is Jewish, they consider you Jewish. If your father is Jewish, that doesn't matter to them.

They identify a Jew as one who has a Jewish mother. And so Timothy was a Jew, but he had a Gentile father. And because of that, obviously, he had not been circumcised.

He had not been brought into the covenant. But Paul, knowing the sensitivities in the area in order that he doesn't have to, you know, end up disputing with these guys and all that. He takes Timothy and he has him circumcised before they head out on the journey together.

He did it really just to keep the peace, not that Timothy needed to be in order to be saved or anything like that. But Paul knew that if he didn't do that, there would be opportunity for contention and argument and things that would just distract from what they really wanted to do. They really wanted to go out and preach the gospel.

So Paul, as his practice was, he tried to be sensitive to to people's hang ups, not to the point that it would put him in bondage. But if he if he saw that something was an obstacle, that people couldn't get around certain things, he wasn't so, you know, headstrong that he would say it doesn't matter. Forget it.

You're wrong and I'm right and I'm just going to keep doing this. Paul would he would compromise, not compromise in the sense of compromising his faith. Or things that, you know, really would concern the Lord, but he would compromise in areas that didn't matter when it was just one opinion over another, he would sometimes just say, well, you know what, I'll drop my opinion here just for the sake of peace and getting on with the work.

And there's something admirable about Paul in that, and that's a trait that Christian leaders need to possess if we are so headstrong and so adamant that our way is the only way, as some have said, it's my way or the highway. You know, if we're like that, we're going to find there are a lot more people out on the highway than there are on your way because people just aren't going to go for that. We need to be flexible.

We need to realize, you know, that there's a time and a place where my opinion, it doesn't really matter. My opinion could just really be holding up the whole work of God here. So because it's not an issue of any merit or weight with the Lord, it's just my own personal feeling about something.

I'm just going to drop it and say, you know, what does it matter? You know, I got a letter last night from a person who wrote me, challenging me on some things that I said recently, and as I read the letter, I thought on the one hand, I thought, you know, I could send back a lengthy letter and argue with them and tell them all the reasons why I said what I said and how I stand firm by my convictions and all of this. And as I thought about it, I felt like the Lord saying, don't bother. That's not going to.

That's not going to bless or benefit, just say you made a mistake, just say you're wrong. And and I did, I just wrote a little note back, said thanks for pointing that out to me. I think you're right.

I probably did say things I shouldn't have said. And thank you. I appreciate that.

I'm going to learn from it and God bless you. And and there have been many times in my ministry where the Lord has had me do that. I remember years ago, a lady came in and she sat down and she just read me the right out, you know, you've done this and that and this and the other thing.

And, you know, 20 minutes later, she's, you know, still veins are popping out her neck and she's and, you know, and what do you have to say about that? I said, well, you're right. You're right, I I've blown it. Forgive me.

She didn't know what to do. She's expecting a big fight. And the Lord used it to just disarm her and just to end the whole thing.

And sometimes what we do is we just get so into our opinion. And our convictions about things that don't really amount to anything other than my own personal preference on something. And we become so, you know, set in our ways that we really can hinder the work of God.

Paul wasn't like that. He said, I have become all things to all men. That I might win more people for Christ.

So, of course, never compromising the essentials of the faith, never compromising doctrinal things. We're not talking about that, but just, you know, putting his own opinion aside at times and just saying it doesn't

really matter. And that's what he did here.

He could have contended with these guys. He could have just said, forget it. I'm not going to cater to their legalism.

Come on, Timothy, let's go. But yet. He said, no, I don't want to get caught up haggling with these guys.

I don't want to waste our time with this sort of thing when we need to be out preaching the gospel. Let's just do this and then they won't have anything to gripe about. And so they did.

Now, as they went through the cities, they delivered the decrees to keep which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily. So these are the churches that they had already visited.

They're going back now to the various churches that they had been to on that first journey, and they're delivering the decree that was given in Jerusalem so that all the Gentile churches would know that there was nothing to this thing about keeping the law of Moses and being circumcised. And as they're visiting the churches, they're strengthening them and the churches are growing. God's working.

Things are happening in these communities. And now there's, you know, really, as Luke does often, there's quite a long period of time that's just covered in a sentence or so. So, you know, perhaps even a year has passed as as they've been on this journey here.

But then in verse six, it says now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. Now, Phrygia, Galatia, Asia, all of these different places, these were regions in the area that we know today as Turkey. But like Asia, for example, was a province.

It wasn't the it wasn't the whole area that we would know today as Turkey. It was a part of that area. Actually, Asia would be the place where Ephesus was or Thyatira or Sardis or Smyrna or Philadelphia, any of those churches that Jesus wrote the letters to.

They were located in the province of Asia. And now what we read here is that the Holy Spirit forbid Paul to preach the word in Asia. Now, people would say, well, why would the Holy Spirit forbid anybody to preach the gospel anywhere? I mean, come on, isn't that what we're supposed to do? But you see, the Lord knows where people are at.

And the Lord has a timing. For everything that he's doing now, here's the interesting thing, the word is going to be preached in Asia, as a matter of fact, Paul is going to do it. But here's the thing.

Now is not the time. Now is not the time. The timing wasn't right for that particular area for whatever reason.

And this is such an important principle to understand that there are there are places that have been primed, in a sense, by the Holy Spirit. And it's those places that the Holy Spirit, you know, sort of prepares in advance that he will send his servants into so they can follow up on the work that he's already been doing. And there are some places that are farther along than other places.

There are some places that, you know, are close to being ready, but maybe aren't ready right now. There are some places that aren't going to be ready for a long time. And there are some places that are ripe for

the picking.

And so the Lord here is directing Paul, and I believe he's directing them to the places where he's already been working in advance and where the timing is right. The tree is ripe and the fruit is ready to pick. That's what's happening here.

So it wasn't time yet to go into Asia. And just like that was the case, then there are places today as well. Where we have to be sensitive to the leading of the spirit and to timing, I am of the firm conviction that God leads people and he sends people into places.

He opens doors, he closes doors, and it's all about his sovereign plan. And therefore, I disagree with the person who says you should never pray about where you go, you should just go. Some people talk about the mission field as, you know, a place that you don't really look for a specific area, you just go wherever the need is.

So you look on your globe and you maybe do some studying and you find out where is the greatest need on the planet. And the greatest need would be probably where's the most people that haven't heard the gospel. And so you pick out a place and you say, OK, the greatest need on the planet is in China.

There's more than a billion people there and they don't have the gospel. That's where I need to go. Maybe not.

Might not be time to go to China. You see, we can't determine things by our own reasoning process when it comes to this sort of thing. We need to be led by the Holy Spirit.

So it's not a matter of Jesus said, go, so just go wherever you want to go and trust that that's where God wants you to be. We can build a case right here from this particular passage that the Lord wants to direct us to a specific place. When we went to England, we went at the right time.

And I had numerous people say to me when we were there that the things we were doing and the responses that we were getting numerous times, people would say to me, you know, this would have never happened seven or eight years ago. You could not have done this sort of thing and had the kind of response you're getting, you know, a few years back. And I looked at that whole thing and thought, you know, there's there's a timing element here.

God has got us here at this time. And I believe that the time for that region is here and is coming even more so in the future. But to be sensitive enough to the spirit.

So the Holy Spirit forbids them to preach the word in Asia. After that, they came to Mysia. This is another one of the provinces there, and they tried to go into Bithynia.

Now, Bithynia was further up north at sort of the southern shore of the Black Sea. And they were trying to go there as well, but notice that the spirit did not permit them. So here's Paul and Silas and their team, and they're they're wanting to get churches planted.

They're wanting to go preach the gospel. And they visited the churches that they had already planted. And now they're just saying, OK, let's go.

Let's let's go to, you know, Asia. That'd be great. But the Lord somehow indicates no, and then they say, OK, well, let's go up to Bithynia.

That's the place. And somehow the Holy Spirit indicates to them, no, that's not where I want you to go either. Now, the question arises, how did the Holy Spirit forbid them? How did he communicate this to them? And we really don't know for sure, but it could be that.

The Lord spoke to him prophetically, Silas was a prophet, Paul certainly had prophetic gifts, maybe at some point one of them just sensed the Lord moving and speaking through him that this isn't what we're to do at this time. Some have suggested maybe it was just through a strong impression at some point by the spirit that, no, I just don't think this is what we're supposed to do. Others have speculated that it was perhaps through illness.

Paul got sick and because of his illness, he wasn't able to go in the in the direction that he wanted to go. And that was maybe the way God indicated to him that that wasn't where he was to go. We don't know how the Lord communicated it, but here it says the Holy Spirit forbid them.

And so Luke understood and they all understood in some way that the Lord was closing the door, but not merely closing the door. He's opening a door in another area, but he has the place that he wants to send them to because a lot of it has to do with the right timing. You know, that has happened numerous times with missionaries since apostolic times, William Carey had planned to go to Polynesia.

That's where he wanted to go. But yet the spirit forbid him and directed him to go to India. David Livingston, he tried his best to go to China.

But the Holy Spirit forbid him and directed him to go instead to Africa. Judson went to India first, but then he was sort of driven into Burma. And that's where he spent most of his life.

And that's where he had the greatest impact. You see, God closes doors. But when he closes a door in one direction, he will open it in another direction.

Because he's going before us, he's preparing the way. He's softening up the region by his spirit. He's working.

And again, going back to some of my experiences over in Europe, I can think of places where we would go at times and we would go into communities and we would on some occasions we would have such fierce resistance to the gospel. It was you couldn't you couldn't gain an inch of ground with people. They I remember years ago going into a city in Yugoslavia at the time, and there was only one evangelical church in a city of about 80,000 people.

And it had, you know, maybe 20 people in it. So you think, OK, here's a place that's wide open. They need the gospel.

They don't have anything. And and we went in and we did outreach and we went on the streets and and I'll tell you, we were we met the most fierce resistance. It was unbelievable.

The people were not receptive, they didn't care who we were, what we had to say, their message to us was shut up, get out of here, we don't want to hear it. And they became aggressive and, you know, even violent to some degree. And, you know, it didn't take us long to figure out we better go find another place to do an outreach because this one just isn't happening.

But just, you know, 50 miles in a different direction, we come to another place and we find the complete opposite response. When we stand up and open our mouths about Christ. People gather around and they're hanging on every word and they want to know and they're receiving the Lord.

So how do you explain that? Well, I don't know how to explain it ultimately, but one thing I do know is that God has a means of preparing people and hearts and he softens areas. And sometimes it has to do with prayer. Sometimes you find out later and we'll probably find out in heaven that there were people that fervently prayed for certain regions.

Maybe they actually, you know, had lived in an area and they spent their whole life praying for it. And then they went on to be with the Lord. But yet later on, a missionary stumbles on this place and finds there's a great openness here.

What's the explanation for it? Well, the explanation is these people years ago prayed and God paved the way for them then. And then you find other areas like the one place I was mentioning where, you know, evidently there hadn't been much prayer or maybe, you know, it just wasn't the right time. So there's there is a timing.

God prepares the way and we learn here from from our passage that the timing was not right now. As I said in Asia, churches were planted later and there was a great work of the spirit later. Bithynia, likewise, Peter writes to the to the brethren who are dispersed and he mentions Bithynia as a place where there were churches that were located, but it wasn't the time.

And perhaps. There's another issue that needs to be addressed, it might not have been that Paul was the right guy for that particular task. We don't know that Paul ever did go to Bithynia, it does seem that Peter did, though.

So maybe that was reserved for Peter. And those two things are things that we always have to keep into consideration, timing and the right person. A lot of times the explanation for what's happening in a place where you see a great work of God is simply somebody is in the right place at the right time.

They happen to be the right person for that moment. Now, they pass through Mysia and they come down now to Troas. And Troas.

Is there on the Aegean Sea? And they're in Troas, it says, and a vision appeared to Paul in the night, so they're in Troas and I would imagine they're wondering, Lord, what what is going on? You haven't opened the door for us to go into Asia, you've blocked us from going to Bithynia. Here we are in Troas. What do we do? Where do we go from here? And I would imagine that they were seeking the Lord, that they were really asking God to give them direction at this point.

And so a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, come over to Macedonia and help us. Now, here's the interesting thing.

It seems that Macedonia was never even part of Paul's consideration. You see, in effect, what is going to happen now. Is that the gospel is going to move from Asia into Europe now, at the time, you didn't have those distinctions because it was all part of the Roman Empire.

But to cross the Aegean over to this other region, which, in effect, you know, today is to go from one continent to another. That was what God had in mind. But for whatever reason, Paul doesn't seem to have

thought of taking the gospel over into that area.

Now, perhaps it was because. He was unfamiliar. With that area, he would have been somewhat familiar with the whole region that he had been ministering in because he was a citizen of Cilicia.

And that was part of the whole area there. And of course, he had spent much of his life in Jerusalem as well. So he's in a region that he is familiar with.

He's comfortable with it. But yet when you cross the Aegean over into Greece and into that area over there, in a sense, it's a whole nother world over there. And so it could be that it was just something that they had never thought about actually going in that direction.

But the Lord was working, the Lord was moving, and the Lord was wanting to, I think, show Paul that this message was to go around the world. It wasn't to be limited. He already knew it wasn't to be limited to Jew.

It was a message for Gentiles as well. But now he's learning that's not to be limited to this region here of Asia Minor. God is wanting to bring him across now into what we know today as Europe.

It's interesting when you think of that, because, of course, Europe became the first Christian continent in the sense that Christianity had a large impact on the continent of Europe and had a great influence over the culture. Doesn't mean that every person in Europe was a Christian. It just means that that there was this influence upon the continent and, you know, really in many ways became sort of the base of operation for Christianity.

For a long period of time and up until recent times, it was more or less the center of. The the efforts to get the gospel out into the rest of the world from Europe, the gospel went to Africa, to Asia, to North America, to Latin America, it all happened in Europe. Now, here we are again.

To a place where. Europe now has become a mission field. And the continent that was exporting the gospel now, for the most part, is just completely disconnected from that history and that influence that was so strong, there is no longer there.

And we're finding now that the Lord is leading us back there. In a mission effort. So that's what's happening here, it's a man from Macedonia.

And he's pleading in the vision, he's saying, come over to Macedonia and help us now after he had seen the vision immediately. We sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them. Now, notice in verse 10, notice the we there.

Evidently, Luke joined Paul in Troas because for the first time in acts. It is now being written by a person who's part of the adventure prior to this, Luke is writing as a historian and now from this point on, he's writing, of course, he's writing the history, but he's part of it. He's telling the story that he's involved in.

So here we find it must have been in Troas that Luke and Paul met and Luke began to travel with him. But notice what it says in the latter part of verse 10, that they concluded that the Lord was calling them to preach the gospel in Macedonia. So they're confused, they're wondering where to go, it seems that God's just closing doors all around and then Paul has this vision.

And he probably came. To the group and said, you know, I saw this man of Macedonia, he was saying, come over and help us, and they probably began to talk about it and then they began to pray about it and then they looked at each other and thought it must be the Lord. Let's go, let's take a step of faith, let's go do it.

You know, it's interesting that the Lord doesn't. Always give us crystal clear calling, you know, it wasn't the Lord who appeared to Paul and say, Paul, I want you to go to Macedonia, rather, it was a Macedonian man saying, come over and help us. Now, Paul could have, you know, thought and maybe did think that, you know, what was that all about? Maybe maybe I was just imagining something.

The Lord didn't appear to Paul and say, I sent that Macedonian man in a vision to you now go, but there was an element where Paul, along with the others, they got together and they shared this vision and notice they concluded after, I think, discussion after prayer, after considering the matter, they drew the conclusion, you know, the Lord is leading us to go to Macedonia. That's what we believe and we're going to take a step of faith. A lot of times people are waiting for God to call them on the telephone and say, look, this is what I want you to do or to appear to you at night at the foot of your bed and say, listen, my son.

This is my plan for your life, it's not going to happen that way. The Lord gives us an understanding of his will, but he doesn't do it in such a way that it eliminates the need for faith. We have to take steps of faith, and so what I found in my life is God will give me like, you know, an 80 to maybe 95 percent certainty just in my own spirit and through circumstances that this is what I'm supposed to do.

But the 20 percent or, you know, sometimes even, you know, as little as five, thank God I have to take a step of faith. I have to just say, OK, Lord, I believe that this is what you're calling me to do, and yet I'm going to take this step and trust you that that you're going to take care of it, that that I am hearing you right. And that's something that I believe God requires of all of us.

We all have to take steps of faith, we all have to live by faith, and I think sometimes living in the instant culture that we live in where, you know, we want everything just like that. You know, I think of just the response of so many people to the war situation, you know, after three weeks, people are going, well, come on, what's taking so long? I mean, you know, after all, we thought we'd be done with this by now. Well, this is a war.

And historically, wars take time, sometimes years and years. And I think that just sort of betrays where we are as a culture, that we we want everything instantly. And even as Christians in our relationship with God, OK, God, I want to know now.

Right now, Lord, tell me, what am I supposed to do? Rather than realizing that God reveals things in a process of time and we must seek him. And and I think sometimes we're looking for the Lord to just, you know, almost like a genie, just snap his fingers and it's all going to materialize and we're going to know everything and we're not going to have to take steps of faith or anything like that. That's not the way God works.

God reveals things to us, sometimes slowly, sometimes through much persevering in prayer, and then he doesn't even reveal the whole thing, he reveals part of it. And then he says, OK, now I want you to trust me and believe me and I want you to take a step. And and people are like, what? What do you mean a step of faith? What do I have to have faith for? Come on, God, you just do it all.

But it doesn't that's not the way it works. There has to be that trust, there has to be that step. So here they concluded that the Lord was calling them to preach the gospel.

They were right. But they had to. Trust that that was the right conclusion they were drawing and take the step based on that.

And so they set sail from Troas and they ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day they came to Neapolis and from there they went to Philippi, the foremost city of Macedonia. And that's where the work of God will begin on the European continent in this place in Philippi. But, you know, here's an interesting thought to close with.

They were in Troas. Troas was actually called Alexandrian Troas. They were going over into Macedonia, Philippi, Philippi was named after Philip of Macedon, who was the father of Alexander the Great.

They would also go and minister in Thessalonica, Thessalonica was named after the sister of Alexander. And here's a thought that might have some validity to it. Alexander had conquered the world.

And here's Paul. He's in Asia. He's seeking to, you know, go from place to place in Asia, he's covered a lot of ground already.

And perhaps Paul, at this point, lacked a worldwide vision. Perhaps at this point, Paul did not realize the extent of what the Lord wanted to do to him. But here he is, he's in Troas, Alexandrian Troas, across the Aegean is Philippi, Thessalonica, all of these places, Greece, of course, the center of a world empire because of what Alexander had done.

Perhaps it was there that the Lord began to really stir up policy. Paul, you need to understand, I want this to go around the world. I want to, you know, Alexander's great desire was to to merge the world together as one.

His vision was to bring the East and the West together. And you never know, maybe all of those things put together in Paul's mind were speaking to him that, you know, this God wants to take this all around the world. And we need to step across this continent onto the next one and take it there by faith, we need to go.

And, you know, I can really connect with that kind of a scenario possibly happening with Paul, because that's what's been happening in my thinking process for a while now. Where at one time I would look at myself and I could say that my vision for ministry was somewhat limited, I didn't have a mission's vision per se. I had a vision for my congregation that I was pastoring.

I had a vision for the United States of America where I lived in particularly Southern California. But, you know, there came a point in my life. In ministry where God began to speak to me and say, you know, Brian, I want to do so much more than you have ever imagined.

And the Lord, I have written in my journals from years ago, the Lord spoke to me and said, I want to begin to use you to get the gospel beyond your border right here and actually beyond the borders of your own nation. And at the time, I just thought, are you kidding, Lord? Could that be real? I can't imagine such a thing. But, you know, later on, what I did is I went back in my journal and I read those things and then I went back and filled in all the places that God had sent me in the years afterward and how that vision had begun to come to pass.

And now here we are today, and I find that more and more and more, I have this and I'm just sharing with you my own personal thing here, but I more and more and more, I just have this compelling and I believe it's by the spirit. We've got to get this word of God out to people all over the place, all over the world. And God's opening doors and we're so thankful.

He's opening doors, obviously, throughout the United States, he's continuing to opening open doors and God has done some wonderful things in this country through Calvary Chapel. But now we're crossing over to other continents and God's doing things there as well. And we're in the process right now of working on Calvary Chapel radio that's going to cover all of Britain and parts of Europe initially and also radio that's going to cover Australia and New Zealand and to get the Bible teaching into these places.

And I just think, Lord, this is so thrilling. This is exciting. And I would imagine that Paul, when it suddenly sort of struck him.

That God wanted to do more than he might have even imagined and that it was time to cross over and to go into this whole new region, untapped completely. That his heart leapt for joy. And they went across in faith, just believing that the Lord was going to do something in Macedonia because of this vision.

The funny thing is, as you get to the whole thing, you find that, you know, Paul's first encounter with a person in in that region was not with a man who was saying, come over and help us. It was with a woman who became the first convert on that continent. And so we'll pick up with the exciting story of the planting of the church in Philippi.

And we'll do that in our next study. I don't know if that'll be next week or not. We've got Easter coming up, and so we might pause just for a moment to do an Easter message.

But we'll pick up again in verse 11 when we continue here with Acts. Lord, we thank you that, Lord, you're doing a work today and we are experiencing it. We get to be part of it, not only part of it in the sense that we get to come and just enjoy what you're doing, Lord, but we get to be part of it in spreading it as well.

And Lord, as we read about Paul and as we read about these adventures and as we study tonight, Lord, about the many different things that transpired on this trip. About how you allowed for there to be that that disagreement so you could send out two teams instead of just one, how you block them from going into certain places because you had, Lord, a specific plan to send them in another direction. You had hearts that you had prepared in another region that were ready.

And Lord, all of these things are so exciting as we think about how you lead us by your spirit. And Lord, we want to be led by your spirit in our lives, whether it be led to go out and start a church somewhere or just led to minister to our neighbor. The people that we work with or whatever, Lord, we want to be led by the spirit.

So, Lord, close doors that you want to close and open doors that you want to open and help us, Lord, to realize that we need to trust you and we need to step out in faith. Help us, Lord, not to be caught up in the mentality of our culture and to expect, Lord, just instant success or instant understanding. But help us, Lord, to patiently wait on you and to pray through things and to seek you and to, Lord, commit ourselves to discovering your will, even if it takes longer than we anticipated.

So, Lord, work your work in us and work through us, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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