

- **Good morning! Today we are taking next step in our journey through book of acts, as we go BACK ON THE ROAD AGAIN and join Paul, Silas, and his team on the second great missionary journey.**

† **On the road again! Paul's 2nd missionary journey: Comprises Acts 16-18- very important part of story**

Vital statistics

- Dates: 49-52 A.D. +/- 4 years
- 22 regions and/or cities visited
- **Northern Mediterranean and Greece**
 - Approximately 2,500 miles traveled
 - Three books of New Testament written (*Galatians**, *1st and 2nd Thessalonians*)
- **Galatians possibly right before JC**
 - Luke becomes member of traveling party
- **Early on, see this next week.**
 - Two beatings*, one imprisonment, one jailbreak, two riots
 - The churches were strengthened and many came to believe

Major events

- Introduction of Timothy- **Young protégé, books...**
- Conversion of Lydia- **significant role played by influential woman- Luke doesn't shy away**
- The Philippian Jailer- **miraculous release from prison**
- Founding of Thessalonian Church
- Paul's 'Unknown God' sermon in Athens
- Founding of Corinthian Church- **writing of 1&2 Thess**
- Introduction of Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos

† **To the map!** From Antioch, through Syria, to Lystra

- **Two maps- journey in ancient world, same path on modern map- to give you solid reference- this is real!**
- **Ancient world- many regions, all under umbrella of Roman Empire. For significant portion of journey Paul & team traveled on VIA EGNATIA, or Egnacian Way, famous roman road – built in 2nd century BC, linking Adriatic to Aegean Sea. Talk about that later.**
- **JC has ended, P&B leave Jerusalem, travel north thru modern Lebanon and Syria, back to Antioch. THEN, P&B have split over JM, and here we pick up story....**

Acts 15:40-41 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

- **On map, the team journeys around the North East corner of the Mediterranean sea into region of Ancient Cilicia, which is location of Tarsus, Paul's hometown. Would have been many small communities of Christ followers in this region.**
- **FROM THERE Paul heads west toward the region they visited on first journey, and here we are introduced to a new/significant character, Timothy.**

† **Introducing Timothy**

Acts 16:1-2 Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek. ² The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.

- Derbe and Lystra were last communities visited on 1st journey before P&B turned around and headed back home. **REMEMBER** Lystra- Paul beaten and left for dead. Population extremely superstitious and hostile to Paul and the Gospel.
- **YET**, we see that there is now a community of Christ followers. Timothy's mother, a Jewish woman, had become a believer, probably from hearing Paul.
- **TIMOTHY's** father was Greek, meaning Timothy was mixed race, parents from different religious backgrounds.
- **KEY!** Timothy is a young man split between two worlds- worlds historically opposed to each other. Growing up he may have really struggled with a sense of belonging and identity. But by the Grace of God, Timothy came to receive his identity **NOT** from the ethnic or religious heritage of his parents, but **THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST**.
- And so, impressed by the young man, and how the other believers spoke well of him, Paul invites Timothy to join him on the journey.
- **BUT**, before Timothy joined up, Paul recognized a potential issue, an issue with a solution not so hard for Paul, but that would require extreme commitment from Timothy. **KNOWING** the Jews of the area would be aware of Timothy's mixed race, Paul asks the young man- whose cultural identity was primarily as a gentile- to be circumcised.

† Wait, Paul, you want me to do *what*?

Acts 16:3 Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

- **OKAY.** We'll get to **WHY** Timothy took this step, but first need to understand just how counter-intuitive it was for Paul to make the request.
- The entire JC, which just happened, revolved around whether or not a person had to be circumcised and obey law of Moses to be saved. P&B emphatically said, **NO! YOU DON'T**
- For Paul, circumcision represented everything the Grace of God had come to set people free **FROM**. **LISTEN** to what he wrote in letters...

1 Corinthians 7:18-19 Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. ¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts.

Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Galatians 6:15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.

- **Finally, in Colossians, Paul proclaims that true circumcision is a matter of the HEART, and is a work done by Christ, in taking away our old fallen nature and making us new creations....**

Colossians 2:10-11 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ,

- **SO, with all of that, WHY ON EARTH would Paul ask Timothy to be circumcised?**
- **BEFORE THE GOSPEL, the answer to that question would have been LAW. BUT NOW, IN CHRIST, the answer was LOVE.**

† From law to love

- **To cut to the chase (sorry), Timothy was circumcised so that his mixed race would not be an issue hindering his ability to speak to the Jews of his region who hadn't yet received the gospel.**
- **If I was a Jew living in that region, Timothy represented a problem to me. His Jewish mother shouldn't have married that Greek, and Timothy should have been circumcised at birth!**
- **Everything about my tradition taught me I shouldn't trust Timothy, because he represented a decline, a compromise, in the faith of my people. Bottom line, right or wrong, being an uncircumcised Jew- even half Jew- would have hurt Timothy's credibility with his own people.**
- **AND SO, Timothy submitted to the personal sacrifice of circumcision NOT because of any religious law, but because of LOVE. He wanted his people to come to know the same NEW LIFE in Christ that he knew, and he didn't want his physical status of circumcision to be a hindrance to the Gospel.**
- **THIS leads to an essential principle- a characteristic- of being a follower of Christ.**
- **In any given situation, when we choose what to say, what to do, how we think- when we consider our priorities, our positions, and our pronouncements... WE WILL FUNDAMENTALLY CONSIDER how our words, actions, CHOICES, PRESENCE- impacts other people.**

Galatians 5:13-14 *You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*

- **In Christ, we are called into Freedom. Meaning, this is God's desire and command that we live as free people- freed from the bondage of a life motivated by obligation and performance based acceptance.**
- **Then Paul says BUT. BUT! WAIT! HEAR THIS! Don't use your freedom to indulge your flesh. What is the defining characteristic of our flesh? FOCUS ON SELF. PLEASING self, only listening to the perspective of self.**
- **IN CONTRAST, as people who live by the Spirit- who purposefully look to the Spirit of God as our source- our desire will be to CARE FOR OTHERS. CONSIDER OTHERS. BE BLESSING. Serve one another in love.**
- **Andy Stanley put it this way- rather than asking "what does moral law require me to do", "what does LOVE require me to do".**
- **Peter put it this way....**

1 Peter 4:9-11 *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

- **In ALL THINGS God made be praised... that's not just talking about ME praising God in all things, but people who my life impacts praising God in all things. In other words, in this**

choice I'm about to make, am I leading those around me (family, friends, coworkers, social setting, whatever) TOWARD seeing the Goodness of God, TOWARD praising God, or AWAY from goodness of God, away from praising God.

- *Just one more... In this passage Paul is telling the Corinthian believers that it was his right to expect them to financially/materially support him during his ministry to them.*

1 Corinthians 9:11-12 *If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? ¹² If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.*

- *Friends, we live in a culture where the prevailing mindset is- "I'm not going to put up with that. I'm offended. I'm withdrawing."... OR, "I don't care that you're offended, I don't care what you think, I have my rights and I'm going to do what I want"*
- *Church, Paul and Timothy weren't offended by the judgmental attitudes of the people around them. TIMOTHY CARED about what the people around him thought- he sacrificially surrendered to a tradition that had NO HOLD on him, because he didn't want to offend the people GOD might use him to reach.*
- *Our culture tells us to FIRST ASK "What is best for me". CHRIST IN US will always ask "What is best for those around me. How is my action, my countenance, this decision, drawing people toward or pushing people away from the hope of Christ?"*
- *That's not always easily evident. Life isn't as black and white as we like it to be. Some things require great prayer, thought, discernment.*
- *But church, when a deep motivating desire is to be a blessing to others.... to not just please ourselves but consider how our words, actions, priorities, and decisions will be used by God to reveal his Goodness and identity to those around us... when we don't just THINK about these things, but allow God to use this to impact and direct HOW WE LIVE... there will be an inevitable result. GOD WILL BE GLORIFIED AND PEOPLE WILL BE DRAWN TO THE LORD.*

† The inevitable result

Acts 16:4-5 *As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. (We are not under the OC law, don't make it difficult for outsiders to come to the lord, consider how your actions impact those around you)*

⁵ *So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.*

- *May we be a people- individuals, families, and a church family- that by our thoughts, words, actions, and decisions- strengthen those around us and draw them to the Lord*