

Acts
 “Jesus” The Sequel
III.) Chp. 13-28 “Witnesses to the end of the earth”
Chp. 15-18:21 Traditions and the road less traveled (2nd trip)
16:1-15
 “Graceful in grace”

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I.) Intro.

Years ago I got my 15 seconds of fame when I had just left Arco Arena after just watching a basketball game when my son. He looked over at me and said, “*Dad lets take a short cut across the lawn!*” He jumped the three-foot fence and was heading downward across the lawn as I watched. When I approached the wall my first reaction was, “**Don’t do it!**” But my son turned around and gave me that look that said, “*Man is he ever getting old, why the poor old codger can’t even jump a wall!*” So I went for it! My approach was not very good but my landing was far worse as I fell face first into the grass and continued to roll down the hill 15 to 20 feet. As I stood up all I could hear was my son laughing and his words, “*How does it feel to be the center of attention in front of 17,000 people?*” I had every intention of being graceful, in my head I pictured my self doing what I had just seen my son accomplish yet in my freedom and liberty to jump the wall I was anything but graceful. It brought into view the difficulty we Christians have in being graceful in our grace. Grace carries about the words, “**It’s not about me**”! Ah but how to perform “**It’s not about me**” all the while using me! In this section before us today we see the art of being “**graceful in grace**”.

II.) Vs. 1-5 Liberty in the hands of grace

Vs. 1 You will recall that Derbe and Lystra were two of the city's that Paul and Barnabas had visited during their first missionary journey five years earlier. Comparing the travel patterns between the two journeys you will see that Paul and Silas are heading in reverse order. So Paul takes the inland rout through his hometown of Tarsus, a place where he had ministered several years after his conversion. This time he is with Silas and they travel until they reached Derbe. Paul had a history in these towns:

- Lystra was where he was stoned and drag out of the city when they thought he had died. Then you will recall that the next day he goes back into the city then departs to Derbe.
- Paul having traveled the 40 miles to Derbe was still baring the marks of his stoning. All that Luke tells us of the ministry in Derbe is that they preached the gospel there and made many disciples.

Apparently one of those disciples was a young teenager named Timothy. Can you imagine how you would react to someone, who was in the process of healing from having stones hurled at them because they shared the same message they were now sharing with you? I believe it would have caused Paul's words to naturally bring about two important questions as it related to his message:

1. *What could posses a man to share freely an ideology which clearly does not benefit him anything?*
2. *Why would this stranger risk his life to people he has never met to mention a name some clearly hate to hear?*

In the book that bears Timothy's name we are told that he was the son of a Greek father and that his mother (Eunice) and grandmother (Lois) were Jewish. Apparently his mother and grandmother had taught him the Scriptures, as 2 Timothy 3:15 tells us. So on that day, five years earlier, as a young teenager listened to a blooded man speak of the fulfillment of those scriptures along side his mother and grandmother he gave his life to Jesus.

Vs. 2 Now five years after Timothy's conversion Luke tells us that he was well spoken of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium. Hey folks, *many equate the Church's success on what they see with regards to how large it is but I believe it is far better to evaluate it on what you hear about those who attend!* In Jesus' messages for the Church's in Revelation's He **never** says, "I see how many come into your doors and how full your parking lot has become!" No He says, "**I know your works!**"! The truth was that Timothy had grown in his relationship with Jesus in Paul's absence to the place where Paul sees his value in taking him with him on this 2nd missionary journey, something that he apparently hadn't seen in John Mark.

Vs. 3-5 It is believed that Timothy is probably in his late teens or very early 20's. Normally under Jewish law a child took the religion of the mother so Timothy should have been circumcised when he was eight days old according to the law but he had not been. The Jews of that region knew that Timothy's dad was a Greek so in not being circumcised Timothy would have been seen as one who was renouncing his Jewish heritage in favor of his Greek heritage. You may recall that Paul stood up adamantly opposing the circumcision of the Gentile Titus (Gal. 2:3), yet here suggests circumcision in the case of Timothy. Wow what a tough decision Paul, Timothy and Silas needed to

make as they saw that Timothy, a gifted and called young man, would be of great service to the Lord's work. The **problem was that of perception** in using him, as he would be a stumbling block to hear the gospel of grace because the unsaved Jews would have seen Timothy as an apostate!

Now the irony of all of this is that they were going to go through the cities delivering to the Church the decrees agreed upon by the council at Jerusalem stating that a Gentile was saved by grace and not by circumcision and keeping the law. **We learn two very important lessons from the different actions between Titus and Timothy:**

- **SERVICE HAS A HIGHER STANDARD:** What I mean is that all one needs to ask is, "*Did Timothy have to be circumcised?*" The simple answer is **NO!** Paul plainly states in verse 3 that Paul took Timothy to get circumcised **"BECAUSE OF THE JEWS"** The word "*because*" means out of consideration of the Jews. In other words Timothy had the liberty or freedom to remain uncircumcised and still be a Christian, but if he wanted to be serving in the ministry of the Word he would need to set aside his liberty and freedom for the sake of others. Paul didn't mean this as a test but it was still an important test nonetheless. **One of the great evidences of a person's maturity and growth in the grace of Jesus is their willingness to set aside personal freedoms for the sake of other's spiritual growth!** Timothy said, "*Sure I'll get circumcised because I already am saved and I want to make sure that others will get saved as well.*" Hey folks, are we willing to demonstrate our understanding of grace by giving up our liberty for the sake of love and a more effective ministry?

- **GRACE MEANS FURTHERING GOD'S KINGDOM NOT MY FREEDOM:** Timothy went with Paul and Silas sharing the wonderful glorious truth that salvation was by grace and not circumcision and it cost him circumcision so that those that heard that truth would be receptive to the message! If you really understand grace then you realize that it's not about you it's about God and His kingdom! The out come is that the Churches were literally made solid or stable in the faith. They were made solid in the FAITH of the Word through the setting aside of personal liberty.

Looking over these five verses I see a **fourfold prescription for spiritual growth:**

1. Vs. 1-2 **DISCIPLESHIP:** As Paul saw Timothy he took him under his wing and began to work with him. Folk's this is the best thing anyone can do to grow in Christ get with an older more mature believer and learn from them.
2. Vs. 3 **DENY SELF:** As Timothy submitted to the act of circumcision he was cutting away his own flesh with its self-interest. You will see no further spiritual growth in your life until you deny self.
3. Vs. 4 **DEPEND ON JESUS:** They brought the letters of the leadership that stated the righteousness was upon trusting in Jesus and not our works. So we too must continue to learn to trust in Jesus in every thing we do and not ourselves.
4. Vs. 5 **DIG INTO THE WORD:** As the Word was shared these Christians became more stable. Paul would later encourage this same Timothy with the words, "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" Folk's spiritual growth can't happen apart from getting into the Word of God.

III.) Vs. 6-10 In the direction of grace

Now it is interesting to me that as we take up this next section of God's leading and guiding that it follows right on the heels of spiritual growth. So many people in the Church want to know God's will for particular situations but I think there would be far less worry in this area if we all just dedicated ourselves to the above four things. Be that as it may we can see five truths to help us *be "directed by the Spirit of God."*

- a. Vs. 6a **JUST GO:** Paul is following what and where he felt God was leading based upon where they had gone before. When Paul came to Iconium they did not feel like going down to Antioch or Perga where they had come on the first trip so Paul just kind of thought well lets go to Asia. Asia was where Ephesus was and it was also the place where they would stop by on the way home. They did not allow not knowing where to go to stop them from going. So many folks say, "*Well I just don't know what God's will for me is so I'm not going to do anything.*" That was not the case with Paul he followed a course and allowed the Lord to stop him. Saints, **God guides us best when we already have momentum.**
- b. Vs. 6b-7a **GOD OPENS DOORS AND CLOSES DOORS:** We are not told how the Holy Spirit forbids the team to go down to Asia or to not go to Bithynia which is on the Black Sea but He did. Simple put the **Team was being guided by hindrance or closed doors.** We don't often look at God's will this way but the truth is that **He guides us as much by not allowing us what we want as He does by what He does**

allow. In 1 Peter 1:1 Peter includes the Christians in Bithynia in his address which tells us that *just because God closes a door for you does not mean that it is closed door to someone else.*

- c. Vs. 8 **THEY WENT WHERE HE LET THEM GO:** Unable to go to the left or the right *they went forward.* Now Troas was where the famous battle around the ancient city of Troy happened. It was right on the Aegean Sea. Notice the words here, “*passing by Mysia*” that means that they did no evangelism there.
- d. Vs. 9 **GOD WILL MAKE HIS WILL KNOWN:** Folks if God wants to get your attention to direct you in some way He will! If He is guiding He will be providing! Paul had a vision from the Lord of “*a man from Macedonia*” standing over him saying that he needed help. Paul was on the furthest edge of Asia in what is now called Turkey and he receives a vision to bring the gospel to Europe through Greece. **He and his team would have settled for some cities in Asia and God wanted to give them Europe.**
- e. Vs. 10 **BE OBEDIENT TO FOLLOW:** The word “*concluding*” means to knit together in the mind. Paul did not yet know all the details what he did get was that the “*help*” the man from Macedonia needed was the gospel of grace and that the time to go was now. It is interesting that we have a change in Luke’s narrative from verse 8 as it was “they” and now in verse 10 it is “we”. Many believe based upon

this that the man from Macedonia was none other than Luke himself.

What is certain is that Luke seems to join the team at this point.

IV.) Vs. 11-18 A purple heart, the medal of grace

Vs. 11-12 Paul and the team set sail for Europe and the Greek coast making it in two days, which on his third missionary journey it will take 5 days going the other way. I got to tell you I like that about God. I mean they had a hard time knowing which way God wanted them to go but when He finally showed them it was a straight shot. *Sometimes we need that assurance in a new venture don't we?*

They land at Neapolis, which means “*new city*” and was the seaport for Philippi ten miles away. Philippi was an important city and had gotten its name from the father of Alexander the Great who named it after himself. The city’s claim to fame and the reason why it maintained an important status to the Romans was from the battle in 42 B.C. when civil war broke out in the Roman empire between Mark Anthony and Augustus as they defeated Brutus and Cassius right outside the city. After the war many army veterans settled there and the city was designated a Roman colony. Because of its location to the sea and trade routes as well as gold mines it was a bustling community. It also was famous for a school of medicine whose graduates were sought after all over the world. Perhaps Luke was a graduate of the school and that is why he calls it the “*foremost city*” when geographically it was not.

Luke is going on to describe three conversions in this chapter all of them at Philippi:

- Vs. 11-15 Lydia
- Vs. 16-24 A slave girl

- Vs. 25-34 Philippian jailer.

Vs. 13-15 We know that it took 10 males to form a synagogue so seeing that there weren't ten males they meet by the closest river. So Paul and the team head out to the Gangites river just outside of town where they find only women in prayer. Is that not great, Paul received a vision from a man from Macedonia and when he gets there it is not a man that he preaches too but instead a few ladies. **Folk's it is good to learn to be flexible to the leading of the Holy Spirit because often how you expect things to go in your head is not how you will find them.**

Lydia we are told was a businesswomen involved in the selling of purple dye from Thyatira which was in Asia near Ephesus. Thyatira's former name was Lydian so perhaps this was nothing more than a nickname. Purple cloth was extremely expensive and only the wealthy could purchase it. She was a follower of God in the since that she practiced Judaism. Now look what Luke has to say about her conversion, "*The Lord opened her hear to heed the things spoken by Paul.*" ***Paul did not save her the Lord opened up her heart.*** Salvation does not depend upon a slick message or any of the other stuff you so often see in the Church today. Look at what she does, she opens up her home to them to use as a base as Luke uses a phrase that means that, "*she sold them on the idea.*" **When a person is open to hear the Lord they open their home to Him as well.**